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M E M O I R S

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OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

ABATE METASTASIO.

IN WHICH ARE INCORPORATED,

TRANSLATIONS

OF HIS

PRINCIPAL LETTERS.

By CHARLES BURNEY, M^{rs}. D. F. R. S.

Omniaque ejus non solum facta, sed etiam dicta meminisset.

Cic. Somn. Scip.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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M E M O I R S
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF THE ABATE
PIETRO METASTASIO.

S E C T I O N I.

ABOUT the time that Signor Mattei opened a correspondence with our bard, he had many letters to write of mere compliment to authors who sent him their works, and of civility to others who had praised his own. Except the letters to the *Romanina* and his brother, those to *Farinelli*, *Saverio Mattei*, and his old friend Sig. *Filipponi* of Turin, are the most confidential. However, there are frequently passages in his letters to others, which merit preservation, either for their wit, ingenuity, politeness, or, for the sentiments they contain on subjects of literature; and of these we shall select a few,

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previous

previous to resuming his correspondence with his more particular friends.

In 1766, the Abate *Vincenzo Camillo Alberti* began a correspondence with our poet, which continued till 1773; of which correspondence near thirty letters have been inserted in the printed collection. But as they are short, and contain little more than expressions of thanks and politeness for his offers of friendship and presents of his works, but little can be extracted from them, that can either amuse or interest an English reader; particularly, when deprived of the fascinating elegance with which they are expressed in their native language.

The first letter from Sig. *Alberti* to which the answer of *Metastasio* is preserved, inclosed a Cantata—"I cannot but be much flattered and obliged by your voluntary offer of friendship, with such partial expressions in my favour; and as a demonstration of its value, you communicate to me a Cantata of your own writing, which is truly happy, affecting, and graceful. But how can a man at my time of life, tired with his indispensable occupations, support a regular correspondence? Unless you could remove a number of Olympiads from my shoulders, and
give

give me a little of your own leisure, I should certainly merit only your compassion for my inability to avail myself of the honour which you so generously offer me."

When Sig. *Alberti* sent *Metastasio* a Sonnet which he had written with an intention of prefixing it as a dedication of his Cantatas to the poet, he says: "I am extremely grateful for your affectionate partiality, and congratulate you on the production of so beautiful a Sonnet; but at the same time, must entreat you most earnestly, to relinquish your obliging design: as such incense has ever, from time immemorial, been devoted to the favourites of fortune, not to us poor inhabitants of Parnassus. And this reason has, hitherto, sufficed in defending me from others who have had a similar design: and I promise to myself the same complacence from you, which I shall regard as a proof of your friendship, and a stimulus to the continuance of that esteem with which I have the honour to be, &c."

This Abate seems, with great friendship and zeal, to have complained to *Metastasio* of the liberties then taking by some opera botchers with his dramas; to which the poet replies: "Spare your virtuous indignation, my most obliging Sig. *Alberti*, for occasions

more worthy of your wrath, than the alterations of some of my dramas. If the corrections are just, I ought to be grateful to those who shall enlighten me ; and if otherwise, I shall not be sorry that the public, occupied with the faults of others, shall have the less leisure for reflecting upon mine. Let not my aversion to the writing long letters diminish your esteem : on the contrary, believe me ever, in spite of this infirmity, invariably yours."

Metastasio having, in sport, told the Abate, that he should be unable to write for some time, as he was ordered by his imperial mistress to take a journey to Parnassus ; Signor Alberti, not understanding that the poet meant to shut out all interruption, and devote his whole time to the muses, broke in upon him with an unexpected letter, to which he pleasantly makes the following reply. " Long life to my most officious Sig. Alberti ! who for the sake of his friends, in imitation of Hercules and Theseus, does not decline having a commerce with the other world. Upon my having told you that I had made my last voyage to the Elysian fields, you went thither by letter to seek me : solicitous to know the truth from myself. For once, I have the pleasure to thank you from

Vienna.

Vienna. But if I had been found in that remote region, I know not whether my answer would have come so soon. However, after this convincing proof, I am sure that the inexorable fates may rob me of what they please; but they will never place me beyond the power of your compass."

The following extract from a letter to the Abate *Alberti* will communicate to the reader *Metastasio's* opinion of blank verse.

"I am much obliged to you for the new poetical composition which you were so kind as to inclose in your last letter, and which I should rather call an epistle, than a poem. It appears to me learned, the thoughts seem noble and well digested, and the style as poetical and harmonious as is possible in our endecasyllable measure, stript of rhyme. Whether from reason or habit, I know not; but my ear cannot easily accommodate itself to this convenient liberty, which perhaps, idleness has recommended to some of our illustrious Italian bards. It is true, that rhyme sometimes tyrannically impedes the expression of our thoughts: but it is likewise true, that it often suggests to us ideas that are more luminous and sublime, to which our minds would never have soared, but for the violent efforts to which this troublesome

stimulatrix has obliged us to have recourse in our distress. And it is certain, that there is as much difference in the force of the same thought happily expressed in rhyme and in blank verse, as in that of a stone thrown with the hand, and with a sling. Not that I disapprove of this liberty in the epistolary or didactic style. In these, it seems as if the poet may dispense a little with this music, which is always essential to true poetry."

" I know not what can possibly have seduced the worthy Countess Bianchi in my favour. I am so proud of such an enviable partiality, that I pray to heaven she may never be undeceived. Pray present her my most humble thanks, and try to keep her in this mistake."——

Speaking of the Emperor's Tour through Italy, incognito, in 1769, he says: " we know nothing more of the august pilgrim here, than that he quitted Vienna the 3d of this instant March, in the evening; that there is no doubt but that he intends to visit Rome in this manner to avoid ceremony, of which he is an irreconcilable enemy; and that he proposes to pass unknown wherever he goes; but his star is thought too luminous to be concealed

concealed by any cloud which he can get behind."——

"My most obliging Sig. Alberti, ever eager to confer favours on me, has been the first to inform me of the happy delivery of the little niece of my dear Gemello: pray accept of my best thanks for the courteous diligence with which you have quieted my solicitude*."

Metastasio's correspondent, the Abate Alberti, had been long confined to his bed by a broken ankle. When he sent him some works which he had produced during that state—The Imperial Laureat says: "I shall read the book whenever I can get time for that gratification; but, at present, I have hardly leisure sufficient to thank you for it. I have, however, perused the little Cantata that was inclosed in your letter, by which I find, that though lame, you have either been able to clamber mount Parnassus, or are so well with the muses, that they scruple not to visit you in bed. Get up, for heaven's sake, that you may no longer oblige them to

* This was the little fractious homely child, of which Farinelli was so fond, when I visited him at Bologna, in 1770.

such practices as, to those who envy you, may appear scandalous.”——

“ In your last letter, you wish me to be diffuse in my answer, and point out an opportunity for me to discuss certain questions in the Asiatic manner. Ah, my dear Abate, you suppose me young, robust, and idle. Would to heaven you were not mistaken! But, for my misfortune, neither youth, strength, nor leisure, are allowed me. The mere duties of my office are now a grievous burthen to me : think then how unfit I must be, to scrawl whole sheets, merely to shew my eloquence and genius : I leave all this to you, who are in the prime of life *.”——

“ The last Sonnet with which you have been pleased to favour me, leaves all the other poetical compositions which the muses have hitherto dictated to you, far behind. I congratulate you upon it : but am unable to comprehend how, in your painful situation, it is possible for you to have an inclination to tune the lyre. Though I can plead no such painful impediment, yet I can never brush the dust off mine, unless from absolute necessity. In the ensuing nuptial celebration

* Metastasio was now seventy-four.

there will be no theatrical exhibition. I obtained not this information, till I had almost finished a drama which I was ordered to write : so that I have not been spared, as I might have been, a labour which is now become heavy and ungrateful *.——

“ Your sonnet shall be enjoyed by the few palates that are able to taste it.”——

“ I know not whether I ought to congratulate you on the huge purchase you have made of Italian dramas. You will find, as formerly happened to myself, in an immense quantity of straw, but very little grain, and that of a bad quality. *Siface* will not compensate for the bad harvest. I am extremely grateful to you for the obliging offer of it, which you make me ; but having, some years ago, met with a copy of this old opera, I gave it a perusal, and am by no means tempted to acknowledge it as my legitimate offspring. It is a drama composed against my will : the idea was to reform an old opera at the request of *Porpora* : and in reforming, it was entirely changed ; as the original materials

* This drama (*Ruggiero*) was, however, completed, set to music by Haffé, and performed at Milan, in 1771, upon the marriage of the Arch-duke Ferdinand, with the princess of Modena.

were so totally different from the additional, and so discordant, as to form a contrast that was insupportable and monstrous. And yet, it is not mine, though I believe there remains not one verse as it was written by the first author. In order to be truly mine, the first design should have been of my invention; but my intention was merely to rectify some particular parts; and though I have left none untouched, I have never regarded them as members of a whole fabric of my construction. Therefore the connexion must necessarily remain imperfect. Make, however, what use you please of *Siface*; only do not let it pass for a child of mine, as I cannot conscientiously regard it as such.

Writing is always an inconvenient business to me; but to-day, on account of the excessive heat, which dissolves me, it is insupportable, so that being totally unable to lengthen my letter, I haly conclude."

Vienna, June 29, 1772.

There are two more short letters to the *Abate Alberti* in the collection; but they contain nothing very piquant or interesting. It had been reported about this time, all over Europe,

Europe, that the poet had been appointed Imperial Librarian, in the room of Baron *Van Swisten* deceased; and upon being congratulated by the Abate Alberti on this promotion, he says, "the report is entirely without foundation; nor do I imagine that my august sovereigns ever thought of me, when the vacancy happened. Indeed if, from excess of clemency, they had, I should have been obliged to implore their dispensation from a weight superior to my physical force, which would not have enabled me to perform the duties of such an appointment."—

In the last letter to the Abate, he thanks him for a neat and elegant edition of his Italian poetry. He denies the writing a Canzonetta in praise of the immortal Marshal Daun, which Alberti had ascribed to him: "take care not to defraud the real author of those praises which are his due—Pray return with my respects, due thanks to the most obliging Lord Huntingdon for the courteous remonstrances with which he honours me."

Vienna, April 29, 1773.

A correspondence seems to have been begun about the year 1767, between our poet and

the Abate FABRONI, afterwards Bishop of Pifa ; a person of literary abilities, for whom Metastasio manifests great respect. His Lives and Eloges of illustrious men of his own country, which he began to publish at this time in decades, seem undertaken with a patriotic view, during the disputes between the French and Italians for literary and scientific pre-eminence. The title of his biographical work is certainly the same as that of *Perrault*, in the last century (*a*); but then the Italians have to boast of many works on the same plan, and under the same title, which are much more ancient than that of *Perrault*. Signor Fabroni having expressed an intention to write the life of Metastasio, in order to insert it among his lives of eminent men, the following letter contains the poet's modest dissuasion from that enterprize.

(*a*) *Eloges des Hommes illustres de ce Siecle* (the xvii.)
Elogi d'alcuni illustri Italiani.

L E T-

L E T T E R I.

TO THE ABATE FABRONI, AT FLORENCE.

WITHOUT framing excuses for the slow arrival of my answer to your very obliging letter of the 9th of last May, the well-known confusion in which we have been thrown, by the loss of a most amiable Empress; by our fears of being deprived of our maternal and revered Sovereign; and, at present, the universal, and tumultuous joy, for having miraculously preserved her, will have already made my defence, and procured your pardon. Therefore, after rendering the sincere and due thanks which I ought, for your most constant voluntary partiality, I congratulate your royal Sovereign, who, in having promoted you, has given such an indubitable testimony of his enlightened mind, and generous heart; always ready to see merit and reward it.

But, notwithstanding your partiality, I perceive, that you have a design to injure me very seriously. The persisting in your idea of writing my life, is an evident proof, that my repugnance, in consenting to it, has been regarded by you as a kind of female modesty,
which

which a little entreaty would overcome. No, my dear Abate, you are very much deceived. Whether from reason, or weakness, I cannot think of any one writing my life, without the utmost disquietude. From this sincere and candid confession, I hope that you will have the friendly condescension to relinquish the enterprize; a favour which I most earnestly supplicate, and shall receive with all due gratitude.

Vienna, June 11, 1767.

This request was complied with, during the poet's life; but two years after his decease, his eloge, by this author, appeared, with those of *Galileo Galilei*, *Mich. Angelo Giacomelli*, *Tommaso Perelli*, *Card. Leopoldo de' Medici*, and *Carlo Innocenzio Frugoni*. Pisa. 1754.

L E T T E R II.

TO THE SAME.

FROM your obliging letter, reverend Sir, dated July 6th. I was induced to hope, that I should soon receive the first decade, of your *Lives of Illustrious Italians*, which I have expected

pected with the utmost impatience. Occupied at present in the exercise of my employment, it was my intention to defer answering your kind letter, till the arrival of the gift. But as it has not yet reached my hands (by one of those innumerable accidents which usually disturb the course of similar presentations) I shall not suffer a longer silence, now my inevitable duties are fulfilled, to injure me in your good opinion. Know then, most reverend Prior, that in the perusal of your letters, my mind is filled with all the gratitude, confusion, and affection, which are due to your friendly and unsolicited partiality, for one who has neither the opportunity, nor the power, of meriting it. But being in possession of this inestimable acquisition, I am, and ever shall remain, extremely proud of it.

But why, with such dispositions in my favour, do you imbitter my satisfaction, by publishing such frivolous letters as these, written without the least reflection, in the full confidence that they would never see the light? Good God! You estimate the public indulgence by your own, and are deceived. The public is a most severe judge; and if it made the father of Roman eloquence trem-
ble

ble (which he was not ashamed to confess) at a time when he had fully prepared himself for its tribunal, with what conscience can it be called excess of modesty in me, to dread presenting myself before it, with four miserable little letters, written in haste to confidential friends, without ever perusing them? No, most reverend Prior, I have not the courage, or rather arrogance, requisite for such an exhibition. And whether my fears are reasonable, as I really think them, or constitutional errors, I have no hopes of ever vanquishing them. If you still regard them as infirmities, the pardoning small defects is one of the most sacred duties of friendship. Treat them, therefore, as such, most worthy Prior, and indulge me in this petition, as you obligingly did, in renouncing the design of writing my life. The literary world abounds with subjects much more worthy of your pen, and I have, in my former letter, honestly confessed how much I am disturbed by the mere idea of usurping such incense as is by no means my due.

Vienna, September 24, 1767.

L E T-

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE first volume of the lives of illustrious men, of which you have been pleased, most reverend Sir, to make me a present, has been obligingly delivered to me, by Count *Strafolds*. The names of persons with whom, during childhood and adolescence, I lived, or at least was acquainted, and who compose the chief part of this first decade, stimulated immediate perusal; and the insinuating flow and elegance of style, would not suffer me to lay the book down, till I was arrived at the last page, and had perused the additional commentary on the life of my dear fellow student, Count *Dandini*. Having now gratified the first hasty curiosity, I shall give the work a second and more deliberate perusal; not passing by, as was the case before, the two lives written by *Morgagni*, which treating of persons with whom I have but little acquaintance, had not excited the same curiosity as the rest. The rapidity of my perusal, however, did not prevent my seeing the merits of the writer; besides the style, which manifests long study and experience,

the laborious task of collecting materials so dispersed and obscure, the prudent and laudable dexterity of uniting truth with discretion, and the various and deep learning and science, necessary for the accurate display of whatever faculties the subject presented, justly entitle the author of so solid a work, to the praise and gratitude of the public.

Vienna, October 8, 1767.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

You wish me, Sir, to give you my opinion of the dramatic works of my predecessor APOSTOLO ZENO, as if your own judgment were not less likely to be warped by pride, than that of a man who has run the same career, and who seduced by the common and vicious emulation, sometimes even without knowing it, to which *Figulo* is very seldom favourable. In my own part, I am far from certain I should be able in a minute examination of these dramas to steer with safety the rocks of envy and affectation; if no other poetical merit were

Apostolo Zeno, it must be granted that he successfully demonstrated, that our melodrama is not incompatible with reason (as was long thought by the public and the poets whom he found in possession of the theatre when he began to write) that it was not exempt from the laws of probability, that it could subsist without the wild and bombast stile which then reigned; and, lastly, that the buskin might be freed from the comic scurrility of the sock, with which it was miserably mixed and polluted; these are merits fully sufficient to entitle him to our gratitude, and the esteem of posterity.

Vienna, December 7, 1767.

L E T T E R V.

TO THE SAME.

THE studying to be useful to our fellow creatures, and seconding the zeal of a worthy and partial friend, like yourself, are duties which procure blame if neglected, yet have little right to praise if performed. Hence those with which you have entrusted me, most reverend Sir, reflect more honour on the

goodness of your own heart, ever eager to fulfil the duties of humanity, than on mine.

I very much wish that our traveller may continue to enjoy that attention and politeness, during his residence in Poland, which our recommendation had procured him on his arrival : where, according to the accounts which I have received, his reception was extremely flattering ; but that kingdom, at present convulsed by Confederations, is all arms and tumult : circumstances very unfavourable to the fine arts. But a state of such violence cannot be durable. The humours, decomposed, must find their equilibrium, and that tranquillity return which is so indispensibly necessary to national as well as individual happiness.

The well-merited testimonies of esteem with which you have been honoured by the amiable Queen of Naples, manifest the mature judgment of that incomparable princess, at so early an age. Hence, I have a double reason for exultation.

Materials for the *Index* which you desire are wanting (*b*). The manuscripts which remain, are such as have been already pub-

(*b*) Sig. Fabroni had requested of Metastasio, a complete list of all the inedited works of his patron Gravina.

lished,

lished, or sketches and fragments of tracts, begun for amusement, and chiefly left unfinished; the author himself having judged them unequal to the public expectations excited by his high reputation. There may have been works of more importance; but soon after his decease, all his writings were demanded, and retained for some time, by those who had legitimate authority for so doing; and were afterwards returned in the exact number and state in which they now remain. So that it seems as if this article should be wholly omitted in your work.

Permit me to enjoy that enviable place which you have been pleased to assign me in your good heart, and believe me to be always unalterably with due respect, &c.

Vienna, June 13, 1768.

L E T T E R VI.

TO THE SAME.

At length the custom-house officers, after condemning and rejecting all my demands and enquiries, have produced the little parcel with the dialogues of Phocion so long detained; and convicted of their irregularity

and negligence, have sent it to my house when I despaired of ever receiving it; but accompanied with such childish excuses, as were much worse than the fault.

I indulged my impatience by the immediate perusal of the book, and have ran over five of the dialogues and the greatest part of the notes. I would not postpone writing till I had finished reading the whole work, because I was unwilling to let a post depart ere I had acknowledged the receipt of your valuable present, in order to prevent you from kindly bestowing upon me another copy, on the supposition that the first was lost. I shall not now enter on the merit of the original (c); I must confess that the great truths which these dialogues enforce are well known; but besides their being such as cannot be too often repeated, elegance and learning give them the graces of novelty, I cannot help admiring the excellent disposition of the happy translator's mind and heart, who though able to produce archetypes of his own, transported by the love of hu-

(c) *Entretiens de Phocion sur le rapport de la morale avec la politique*, published by the Abbé Mably, 1763, in which work, though not written by PHOCION, the sentiments of this illustrious Greek are well supported:

manity,

manity, could not refrain from undertaking a labour so much below his faculties, for the love of truth, and the desire of communicating it. I congratulate you on the accomplishment of this work, and full of that affection which you study to propagate among mankind, I remain respectfully, &c.

Vicenza, June 23, 1768.

LETTER VII.

TO THE SAME.

I PERCEIVE, most reverend Sir, from the effects of your last letter, which announces to me the honour which the members of the academy *della Crusca* have deigned to confer upon me, by admitting me of their body, how little I knew myself, and that my former power of suppressing all ambitious views had lost its efficacy. It seems now, that instead of contracting my wishes and hopes, that I may venture to extend them; finding myself fortunately decked with the participation of that splendor, with which this illustrious institution has not only dignified its members, but all Italy. Having had the power, by the force of your friendship and affection

unsolicited to procure me this distinguished honour, I must entreat you to paint to my venerated colleagues, in all the warm colouring of your native eloquence, not only my joy on this occasion, but my most sincere sentiments of respect and gratitude: nor must you forget to represent to yourself how much my debts of gratitude to you are increased by this recent and most obliging manifestation of your friendly zeal.

To judge with christian charity of our neighbour, as it is my duty and interest to do, I have the pleasure to believe, that the frequent calls for my last production are symptoms of affection and partiality; but if I should derive this eagerness from a less flattering source, I should still have the satisfaction of ascribing it to that friendship with which I am honoured, and have authority to boast.

Vienna, September 19, 1762.

There are several other letters to Monsignor Fabroni after he was Bishop of Pisa, which though full of that urbanity and politeness with which the poet treated men of letters in general with whom he corresponded; yet,

as they contain no sentiments or criticism of importance to literature, their insertion here seems unnecessary.

The following correspondence was obtruded upon our bard, by a person whose name seems never to have reached his eyes or ears, before the arrival of the letter which produced the subsequent reply.

L E T T E R VIII.

TO THE ABATE D. GIUSEPPE AURELIO
MORANI.

BEING perfectly ignorant of the situation of the person with whom I correspond, he is intreated to assure himself, that it will not be from disrespect, but want of information, if I should omit any of the *formala* due to his rank and circumstances.

After the perusal of Sig. *Giuseppe Aurelio Morani's* most elegant letter, I cannot be mistaken in regarding him as a young man of great application, genius, and learning; and possessed of that knowledge in the Greek and Roman classics, at which few arrive in riper years. I congratulate my delightful Parthenope (Naples) in the having given you birth:

birth: an honour in which by the right of long residence, and a thousand ties of gratitude, I take a part. But the courteous D. Giuseppe is extremely mistaken in the too partial opinion which he has conceived of me. My talents are much more limited than he imagines: never having arrived at such profound learning or merit of other kinds as to be able to entertain *convivas cultores*, or claim a place in *lauto hospitio*. With respect to genius, father Apollo has treated me with a generosity not above the common, and, in other respects, has not distinguished me from my brethern. Sensible, however, of the merit of D. Giuseppe, I gratefully thank him for his obliging wishes for my prosperity, and am with true esteem, &c.

Vienna, 1766.

L E T T E R IX.

TO THE SAME.

As your first letter inspired me with ideas of your genius and cultivated talents, the second, which I now answer, convinces me of the candour, moderation, and other uncommon virtues with which your heart is furnished:

furnished : internal qualities which I regard as more worthy of being honoured, than the splendor of external circumstances, which are the mere capricious gifts of fortune. If I had not in common your ideal parent (*Penia*) I should give you very different proofs of my esteem, than these vain officious expressions. And as you think you have not exaggerated this metaphorical consanguinity, I wish you to reflect, that the *wretched man* is he to whom the necessary supports of life are wanting, *quibus doleat natura negatis*. The *poor*, he who procures these necessaries from the generosity of others. He who possesses a *competency*, is able to provide for his own wants, And he whose means exceed that power, is *opulent*. If you wish to find my place, it must be in the second of these four classes, where I should suffer with still greater resignation the rigorous justice which providence renders to moderate abilities, if I did not frequently feel the privation of the greatest pleasure granted to mortals, the power of conferring benefits on the worthy. Add to this, that living in a climate where literature is not reckoned among the merchandise of society, my insufficiency is likewise

wife extended to those kind offices, which elsewhere perhaps would not be useless.

With respect to my immortal master, Gravina, he published before his decease, all those works which he thought would contribute to his fame. The rest were never designed for the press, though sordid editors, have counteracted his intentions : so that inquiries after them are as vain, as the assaults of his detractors, from whose fangs he is as safe as every man must be, who like him is *totus teres, atque rotundus*.

Notwithstanding the narrow limits of my situation, if you could suggest to me an opportunity of manifesting my zeal for your service, I shall do it with that sincere and cordial esteem with which I am, and ever shall continue, &c.

Vienna, September 24, 1766.

LETTER X.

TO THE SAME.

You must not wonder, my dear Sig. Morani, at the tardiness or brevity of my answer to your most obliging letter of last

December. A great number of indispensable letters, together with the capricious state of my health, oblige me to defer, and sometimes entirely deprive me of the pleasure I should have in corresponding with persons whom I esteem and love, and from whose forbearance I promise myself the greatest indulgence. But this involuntary negligence, especially when there is no business in question, ought not to diminish the credit of a perfect correspondence, with those who have a mutual affection for each other. Do me the justice to believe, in spite of circumstances, that impressed with a partiality for your talents and character, I shall ever remain invariably yours.

Metastasio begins every subsequent letter to this Abate, by an apology for not writing to him more frequently; which though reasonable, ingenious, and well-turned, in the original, would appear monotonous and insipid in another language. I shall therefore extract from these letters, the most interesting passages on other subjects than his own delinquency as an irregular correspondent.

In

In 1769, Sig. *Morani* wished him to enter the lists among the champions for Italian literature, in opposition to the French, who on all occasions arrogantly claimed the supremacy. After excusing himself for inability to keep up a regular correspondence with his friends, he says—"from these involuntary omissions, you may judge whether I should be able to apply myself to the parallel which you propose between the French and Italian literature: a work of great labour, for any one who should not wish to decide impertinently, without furnishing solid reasons on both sides. Nor am I more able to obey you, in transmitting the MSS. you request, which being merely intended to assist my own memory, merit not transcription, or the honour of appearing before the public; nor will they ever see the light, though curiosity has been awakened by Sig. *Diodati* publishing the letter in which I inconsiderately mentioned them (*d*)."

In the next letter to the Abate *Morani*, in answer to a question, whether a French translation of *Metafasio's* works was pub-

(*d*) See the letter to *Diodati* above, p. 306.

lished at Vienna, he says: "It is not at Vienna but at Paris, that a translation of my works in the French language has appeared; but having had an unfavourable account of this version by those who have seen it, I have carefully avoided the perusal, in order to shun the risk of becoming ungrateful to him who has given such a public proof of partiality to my writings by translating them. It would by no means become me arrogantly to decide, as you wish me, whether *Corneille* or *Racine* has the primacy on the French theatre. The natives find all the grandeur of Sophocles in the first, and all the truth of Euripides in the second. The one filling the mind of the spectator with the most magnificent ideas, and the other agitating the heart with the most tender affections: hence these two artists have arrived at equal excellence, but by different roads. However, *Corneille* cannot be denied the great merit of having pointed out the path which his rival pursued." 1770.

"If you would read without scruple, *Pope's Essay on Man*, I recommend to you the excellent translation *in terza rima*, lately published by Count *Giul. Maria Ferrero di Lauriano*.

Lauriano. In the judicious, christian, and learned notes with which he has illustrated the work, you will see the innocence of the original evidently proved. You will find in Pope a great poet, and a deep philosopher; but not such axioms as are necessary to support his own system."

Though it has been said that Metastasio, unwilling to hear of death, permitted no one even to mention it before him; yet he frequently complains to his correspondents of his having too many Olympiads on his shoulders. And in a letter to the Abate *Morani*, in 1771, when he was in his 74th year, he says: "The state of my health, though not exactly what I wish it, is much better than I have a right to expect. As to my occupations, when the commands of my sovereign allow me to choose them, I, like your favourite Cicero, have recourse *ad Litterulas*; not with the hopes of fame or profit, but to keep off the *tedium vite*, and to march to the end of my journey as slow as possible."

In a subsequent letter to the same Abate, in answer to his enquiries concerning the poet's translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, he says: "Not only my translation in Italian
verse

verse of the Poetics of Horace, with the notes which seemed necessary, but an extract of that of Aristotle, with observations, which rendered the task more tedious and laborious, have been entirely finished a considerable time. And I have exacted the premium of my fatiguing occupation in imagining, that there was some merit in having employed my leisure without remorse. However, it has never been my intention to trouble the public with these labours : and if even temptation should take me by surprise, it would be necessary, ere they appeared, rigourously to examine what I have written : a work to me extremely disagreeable. At present, both sleep in my portfolio, secure, at least, from insult, while they are unknown. You see, that to comply with your request, I must vanquish my irresolute and perverse disposition ; and you know that

Che cangiai di natura
È impresa troppo dura.

The task is hard for human creature
 To change propensities of nature.

“ The tragedies of my immortal beneficent master, are sufficient to prove what philosophy and immense learning the writer

possessed. He has executed what he proposed: that is, to give us an idea of the Greek theatre. If, in after-times, the enormous change of manners renders them inconsistent with the present reigning taste, it cannot be ascribed to him as a fault, because to flatter it was not his intention."

The particular occasion of the following letter does not appear; there seems, however, to be some degree of vaticination in it, which reminds us more of the present times, than of the period when it was written.

L E T T E R X I .

TO A ROMAN PRINCE. (PRINCE GHIGI.)

THE strange and universal ferment in which sacred and profane things are now thrown, throughout the known world, affords little hope that the crisis of its termination is near at hand. The fire has long been burning in secret, but the fuel is weak, and the humours are too heterogeneous to produce an equilibrium. The object of those who might give us repose, is innovation, not tranquillity. Hence, to regulate and reduce to order the enormous confusion of so dark a chaos,

chaos, seems to want nothing less than omnipotence, which needs only say, *fiat lux*, for light to appear. I hope these gloomy thoughts proceed from the vice of my own temperament, and a natural propensity to deplore the present, and exalt the past. But it is very certain, that all great revolutions and changes of ancient systems, (even if it were certain that posterity would be benefitted by them) are ever fatal to the unhappy mortals, who are condemned to be spectators of the conflict.

Vienna, 1767.

In the following letters, he describes his distress at the imminent danger into which his Patroness, the Empress Queen, was thrown by the small-pox, with which she was seized at the same time as the Emperor Joseph's first consort, to whom the disease was fatal.

L E T T E R XII.

TO A FRIEND AT MILAN.

FROM the description which I have given you of the premature death of this sovereign,

and of the extreme danger into which my Patroness was thrown at the same time, you may conceive how pungent must have been my affliction, at these mournful events. It was easy to read in my countenance, the internal agitation of my mind ; nor was there a single person from whom I could conceal it. My confusion, my tears, the being continually in the gallery of the imperial palace, and perpetually making enquiries of the physicians and ladies of the court, concerning the state of my Patroness's health, too plainly discovered to the crowd of courtiers, my confusion and excess of grief. I sincerely assure you, my dear friend, that among the many sad catastrophes to which I have been subject during sixty-nine years, this would have been the most terrible, if it had not pleased divine providence to hear the fervent prayers of her subjects.

Vienna, 1767.

LET

L E T T E R XIII.

TO PADRE PAZZONI, MAESTRO DI
CAPELLA, IN SIENA.

THOUGH I cannot, without manifest ingratitude, doubt of your affection, yet every confirmation of it which you kindly give me, has all the grace and efficacy of novelty. I should be totally insensible, not to be pleased with the perusal of your last letter, in which is displayed at once, all the candour and openness of your good heart, and the honoured and enviable place which I occupy in it: a place of which I have great reason to be jealous and proud. With this confidence, not doubting of the similarity of our sentiments, I must entreat you to come to an explanation with this generous, and worthy lady, by whose partiality I am no less confused than pleased. First begin by asserting my infinite gratitude and respect; and then proceed to implore her to spare me the mortification of seeing in print, as she intends, any of my familiar letters. The public merits respect from all, and particularly from myself; nor can I have the

courage to expect from it that indulgence with which I am honoured by my friends. The major part of my letters having been written in haste, were never read by myself, and God knows how many repetitions, trivialities, and negligences, I should be condemned to blush for. I have sufficient motives to fear for my most laboured works; and I beg of her not to encrease the number of those fears unnecessarily. Unite, therefore, your friendly sollicitations with my own, to prevail on this lady, my protectress, not to put her design in practice, — tell her that it would be an insult, not a favour, to oblige an honest man to quit his bed-room, and expose himself publicly, in his night-gown and slippers.

Adieu, my dear friend. I absolutely depend on your friendship, to prevent this dreaded publication. But at the same time, do not conceal the gratitude with which I am impressed by the obliging, and favourable, though ill-founded opinion, which has given birth to this idea.

Vienna, January 29, 1767.

There is no date to the following letter ;
but it seems to have been written about this
time,

time, when the poet was oppressed by *forced loans* of his time and opinions, to authors, whose works

“ With sad civility, he sat, and read
 With honest anguish, and an aching head.”—
 Beset by wits, an undistinguish’d race,
 Who first his judgment ask, and then a place.”—
 POPE.

But the Italian bard more patient and less peevish than the English, brushes off his tormentors gently, and dismisses them in good humour. His reputation, however, must sometimes have suffered on the side of sincerity, or good taste, where his praises of obscure authors, which were always instantly published by those on whom they were bestowed, bordered on hyperbole. Whether the sonnets, mentioned in the following letter, deserved the encomiums bestowed upon them by the Imperial Laureat, we know not, as they, and even the name of their author, seem equally unknown in the literary world,

L E T T E R X I V .

TO THE CAVALIER ANTON-FILIPPO
ADAMI.

I SHALL not dwell long on the excessive expressions of esteem with which you honour me, in order to escape the disagreeable task of defending myself from the assaults of vanity, which might insidiously seduce me, coming from such high authority. I am abashed by your too favourable opinion; yet I shall not attempt to undeceive you, fearing to shake the foundation of the friendship which you offer me, and which I wish to deserve.

I have perused, and re-perused, the sonnets which you have been pleased, Sir, to communicate to me, and always with just admiration. I have found in them all, force, dignity of style, deep learning, lively fancy, and above all, that unity, proportion, and correspondence of the several parts, which distinguish an inhabitant of Parnassus from a passenger. Though I am pleased with them all, the sonnets upon providence have struck me the most. Perhaps the countenance of
these

these being less austere, distinguishes them, when compared with their companions. Your highly polished productions, when ever you shall be pleased to communicate them to me, will always be received with pleasure. And if you accompany them with any commands, you will greatly gratify my impatience to convince you of the respect and obedience with which you have inspired me.

The following letters to an author, who forced the poet into a correspondence, by presenting to him his works without previous acquaintance or introduction, will perhaps make the reader wonder that he never heard of so accomplished a writer.

L E T T E R X V .

TO THE ABATE SILVIO BALBIS OF SALUZZO.

You must not imagine that the just tribute of praise which I sincerely bestow on the magnificent poetical epistle which you have been pleased to send me, is the effect of the gratitude due to you for your excessive partiality. Its own merit has no occasion to be supported or exalted by the secret influence of my self-love. Therefore, separate
the

the debts of the one from the other, and assure yourself, that truth and justice oblige me to confess, what I could not without remorse deny, that I have not for a long time seen a composition which has given me equal pleasure. The clear, noble, harmonious felicity of style, and the connexion and choice of your thoughts, make me regard as portentous, the maturity of the productions of so young a writer. If your circumstances and situation, of which I am ignorant, allow you with prudence to chuse a study among the useful and glorious, unite yourself in the strict bonds of friendship with the muses, and I will be answerable for the distinguished and elevated rank at which you will soon arrive in Parnassus. Having afforded me so fair an occasion for admiring your talents, afford me likewise that of serving you, and believe me to be, with just esteem and acknowledgment, &c.

Vienna, March 12, 1761.

The subsequent letters to the same correspondent, contain further encomiums on his writings. Metastasio sent this Abate a copy of his several dramas, previous to general publication; and he seems to have
 merited

merited this distinction, not only as his admirer, but champion; as the poet in one of his letters, "thanks him and the ladies and gentlemen of Saluzzo for defending his poor dramas from the injuries which they daily suffer in all the theatres of Europe, from those ignorant and vain vocal heroes and heroines, who having substituted the imitation of flageolets and nightingales to human affections, render the Italian stage a national disgrace, in the opinion of those countries which have been obliged to us for all their knowledge of the art."

This alludes to the abridging and changing the scenes and airs of his dramas, to humour the caprice of fingers, who disregarding character, place, and propriety, not only in *Paſſiccio* operas, but in every other, where no scruple is made to introduce an *Aria d'abilità*, or *di bravura*, which has been applauded in a former drama, without the least attention to the preceding recitative, or business of the scene. These airs taken out of their original niche, when translated in the books of the opera, continue to incline the good people of England to imagine the words of an opera to be *all nonsense*; and that even the musical dramas of Metastasio are as absurd

surd and subject to ridicule, as those which Addison has described with so much pleasantry, in the *Spectator*.

Reciprocation of compliments of the highest kind, seems, about this time, to have passed between the poet and Signor D. *Baldassarre Papadia*. Though we have never seen the letters of this correspondent, we may judge of his reverence and partiality for *Metastasio*, by the answers to them, which for elegance and urbanity, appear to merit translation and insertion, as much as any letters of the kind in the collection.

LETTER XVI.

TO SIGNOR D. BALDASSARRE PAPADIA.

It would be necessary to possess all the stoical insensibility of *Zeno* and *Cleanthes*, long to resist the temptations of vanity, with which you assail the moderation which I ought to possess, in speaking of my dear *Parthenope*. (Naples.) But you, Sir, by an obliging impulse of affection, have endeavoured to give it a great shock. God forgive you. All that you describe in your elegant letter, and all you imagine in your
sublime

sublime Sonnet, not only exceed the narrow limits of my merit, but conspire to deprive me of the true knowledge of myself. Heaven knows what will be the consequence of such seducing praises, addressed to a poet! However, amidst all this danger, I cannot help congratulating myself for the good fortune which has procured me such valuable friends; whose judgment, however partial, will help to support my credit. I wish your great poetical vigour and noble imagination, which have appeared so manifest in the narrow compass of fourteen lines, materials more proportioned to their powers than the gratuitous praises bestowed on me. And shall be anxious to secure your esteem by the gratitude and respectful affection with which you have inspired, your, &c.

Vienna, December 12, 1768.

L E T T E R XVII.

TO THE SAME.

THE justice which I render your poetical talents, does not deserve the excessive gratitude which you have expressed in your last obliging letter. But it has served to discover
cover

cover that laudable and uncommon moderation, which is more frequently found in those who have atchieved honourable and difficult enterprizes, than in such as twang the uselefs lyre.

I am pleased at your having chosen a species of poetry which precisely requires that clear, harmonious sweetness, facility, and elegant simplicity, to which you were by nature at first, visibly inclined. I wish with solicitude for the arrival of the complete edition of your works ; and am, in spite of the laconic brevity to which my laborious business of writing condemns me, &c.

Vienna, February 20, 1769.

L E T T E R XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

TRULY sensible of the partiality with which you honour me, by the communication of the two pastoral Eclogues which you have laudably undertaken to write on the illustrious model of the Sicilian and Mantuan bards, I beg your acceptance of my most grateful acknowledgments. But your obliging partiality exceeds all bounds, if you suppose me
to

to be sufficiently qualified, or courageous, to assume the office of corrector. I am not so deplorably ignorant of myself; and if, unfortunately, I were, nature would oppose me in such an ill-advised undertaking. If your virtuous modesty requires criticism, and counsel, in your poetical labours, how can you ever fail to find them in your native city, the nurse of so many rare and sublime geniuses, and in which the muses have established their favourite residence? Iforgive, however, this courteous insult, as it manifests your blindness to my inability.

Vienna, May 11, 1769.

Signor Papadia having solicited Metastasio to confide to him some of his prose writings, mentioned in his Letter to *Diodati*, particularly his extracts and remarks on the Poetics of Aristotle, he declines complying with this request, on account of the confused and incorrect state in which these papers had long remained. But in answer to another application from the same correspondent, we have in the following letter, the discussion of a curious question in ancient Mythology.

L E T-

L E T T E R X I X .

TO SIG. PAPADIA.

AFTER having consulted the oracle of our times, the learned Sig. *Martorelli*, to whom I have recourse myself, for the solution of literary difficulties, with what conscience could you expect from me, deep information concerning the sacrifices of the ancients to their divinity Cupid? Do you wish to tempt me to be guilty of temerity? If that was your motive, you committed a great mistake: as my ruling defect militates most powerfully against such seduction. After you have applied to my dear and much respected Sig. *Martorelli*, what can I do but repeat what he has said; that I remember no treatise *ex professo* on the subject proposed. If it be asked what were the offerings and sacrifices of the ancients to Venus; you must yourself recollect, that they were innumerable roses, myrtles, incense, fish, shells, doves, and I know not what. Nor can it have escaped you, that Lucian, in one of his meretricious dialogues, will have it, that a white female kid (of goat) was sacrificed
to

to the popular Venus ; and to the celestial, a female calf ; but if you ask the same question with regard to Cupid, it will be more difficult for me to answer. In that most abundant mythological prompter of *Natalis Comes*, where the flowers, trees, and animals dedicated to each particular deity of the Pagans, are carefully specified, Cupid is omitted. But what is still worse, I am not sure that this God, so universally adored, ever had a Temple in any place dedicated solely to his service. I never remember to have heard or read that he had one in Rome ; and *Nardini*, the most diligent investigator and illustrator of the smallest stone in that city, gives us no information on this subject. We might indeed suspect, that there was one in Greece, in the city of *Thespia*, as *Pausanias* in *Bæoticis*, asserts, that Cupid was there adored with peculiar veneration ; but he makes no mention of any particular edifice there that was consecrated to him : nor where that wonderful work of *Praxitiles*, the celebrated marble statue of Cupid, was placed, that *Cajus* caused to be transported from Thespia to Rome, which *Claudius* sent back to Greece ; and which being lastly reconducted to Rome by

order of Nero, perished there afterwards, in the flames. Perhaps some of the historians who treat of the actions of this Emperor may inform us where it was placed at Rome, and with what sacred ceremonies the Romans had received it. But as such amorous researches are more analogous to your time of life than mine, to you I shall abandon the enterprize.

The present of your *Theocritus* which you kindly intend me, will be most gratefully received ; and I hope you will soon find a rapid conveyance for it, which will second my impatience. In the mean time, put my obedience to any test you please, within the limited sphere of my activity, and believe me constantly, &c.

Vienna, March 12, 1770.

In a subsequent letter to Sig. *Papadia*, Metastasio acknowledges the receipt of his pastoral Eclogues ; of which he says : "I am highly pleased to hear again the ancient sweet pipe of the amorous shepherd of Siracuse, managed by your lips : and the facility with which you play upon it, thanks to the analogy between you, authorizes me
to

to hope, that you will not let it again long remain mute, dusty, and uselefs."

He afterwards speaks of other pastorals received from this author: "full of innocence, and yet noble, replete with smiling images, and nourished by the Bucolic genius of the Greeks and Romans, of which even the language is become familiar to you." This correspondence continued till the year 1781.

END OF THE FIRST SECTION.

SECTION II.

AMONG Metastasio's correspondents, to whom his letters are preserved, there are many female writers, and women of talents; who ambitious of his counsel, or, at least of his praise, sent him their works. Though he did not seem to aspire at these honours, yet he received them with due politeness and gallantry. We have already given specimens of the tenderness with which he perused and revised the writings of Signora Accarigi (*e*).

The following letter to a lady who had sent him a copy of verses under the feigned academical name of *Isidèa Egirena*, or challenge to a poetical intercourse, is so polite, sportive, and gallant, that it is difficult to imagine it to have been written, even by a poet, at the age of sixty-nine.

(*e*) This alludes to a letter written in 1774; but the correspondence continued to 1776.

LET-

L E T T E R I

TO SIGNORA MARIA FORTUNA.

WHETHER the beautiful Stanzas addressed to me, and delivered by the common post, are the production of a shepherd or shepherdess, they will always excite my wonder and gratitude. They are so replete with good sense and candour, and supported by such a sweet, noble, clear and harmonious facility, that the writer has no occasion to mitigate critical rigour by the respect due to the fair sex. I profess myself infinitely obliged to whomever is the author. But if, as my self-love inclines me to believe, it is truly the production of a female pen, I beg the ingenious, obliging shepherdess, who has done me such honour, to forgive my doubts, and not to treat them with disdain, as they arise from that uncommon merit which exalts her above her peers.. Nor let her condemn my discourtesy, if I decline soliciting my jaded muse to furnish me with a reply.—In the first place, she is not now so ready at the call of an old husband, as formerly, at that of a young lover. And besides

this, fate having placed me, though unworthy, at the foot of the Imperial throne, has procured me, and still procures, such frequent poetical challenges, that the duty of answering them, would have robbed me of the time necessary to my employment, if I had not from the beginning, though sometimes unwillingly, declined reciprocation.— And if at present I were to change my system, I should incur the just indignation of all those whom I have hitherto involuntarily neglected. Suffer me therefore, if not in the language of the Gods, at least in one more familiar to truth, to assure you, that I have the honour to be, with the most grateful and perfect esteem, &c.

Vienna, November , 1767.

L E T T E R II.

TO SIGNORA GIACINTA BETTI ONOFI,
AT BOLOGNA.

FOR many solid reasons too long to be detailed here, it will not be in my power to second your ardent wishes in the work you mention. Receive at least kindly, my dear Signora Giacinta, the counsel that I shall

I

venture

venture to give you. The merit of the subject which you have to celebrate in your native language, cannot be expressed with due energy by any one whose mind is not impressed with it in the lively manner which you seem to feel. Boldly, therefore, take your pen, and be assured, that your extraordinary talents, animated by that ardour which reigns throughout your letter, will suggest ideas to you; which can never present themselves to the cold imagination, even of a great poet. Nothing is impossible to your abilities; and I feel myself already disposed to admire them, even in this new enterprize.

Vienna, September 26, 1768.

L E T T E R I I I .

TO THE SAME.

THE obliging manner in which you have informed me of the new state into which you will have entered when this letter arrives, is an amiable instance of your regard. The laudable qualities, with which you are well acquainted, of the spouse whom providence has destined for you, are the most certain means of transmuting your,

perhaps too lively quicksilver into gold, and to constitute all the felicity of which we are capable. This is not only what I wish, but boldly predict: certain that you will cooperate on your part in procuring it, and not draw on yourself all the blame of a failure.

A long letter would ill correspond with your present gay occupations: assure yourself therefore of my sincere wishes for your happiness, and believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, February 2, 1769.

LETTER IV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR acquaintance, most amiable Signora Giacinta, with my dear Gemello, the Cavalier Broschi, is a new motive for the increase of that esteem which I have always had for you: as his excellent discernment assures me of the merit of those persons with whom he is in habits of intimacy. And I envy you both that mutual enjoyment of each other's company, at which I can never aspire. Though *Dido* is my eldest daughter, I shall never pardon her for having been the
occasion

occasion of any danger to my beloved Cavalier Broschi (f). This undutiful daughter has but ill seconded the inclinations of her fire, by incommoding persons that are so dear to me. I flatter myself, however, by your account, that the accident had no serious consequences : and I beg you to be the bearer of my most affectionate wishes to this worthy friend.

March 30, 1771.

Metastasio's correspondence with this lady, who was a poetess, a musician, and an electrician, continued till the year 1779. But what still seems more to have contributed to her favour with the Imperial Laureat, was her residence at Bologna, and being in friendship with Farinelli ; of whom he takes occasion to speak with the warmest and most cordial affection, in almost all the letters which he addressed to her.

“ You have obliged me extremely (says he in 1771) my dear *Signora Giacinta*, by honouring me with the continuance of your correspondence, and assuring me of the af-

(f) Alluding to a fall at the opera-house in Bologna, at a rehearsal of *Didone abbandonata*.

fectionate remembrance which my dear and respected friend Sig. *Carlo Broschi* retains for me, which I return with a mutual and most constant reciprocation. I love and esteem him as much as it is possible for a man to be loved and esteemed, who has so far surpassed all his peers, not only by his excellence in the charming art which he professed, but by the uncommon virtuous qualities of his mind, which have rendered him amiable, and admirable, in every situation into which fortune has thrown him. Deliver to him in my name, I entreat you, my most affectionate compliments ; and if the Doctor, your spouse (whom I devoutly reverence) has no objection to the commission, give him for me a thousand most cordial embraces."

In another letter to this lady, speaking of Farinelli's magnificent mansion (called a palace) at Bologna, he says : " my imagination has conveyed me to the habitation of my dear Gemello, where I have seen the splendid decorations of *Nitteti* (g) in all the perfection which he suggested to the ingenious artists he employed ; and in spite of the

(g) This opera was performed in Farinelli's house, with the same decorations with which it was originally represented at the court of Spain.

distance,

distance, and without the assistance of a pencil, poetical fancy has presented to me the amiable figure of *Signora Giacinta*, of which she must doubtless be possessed, in order to bear any proportion with the serenity, grace, and vivacity of her mind. Figure to yourself the pleasure I must have received from the salutations of my beloved friend, procured by your means. But I beg you to complete the work, and render him, in my stead, a modest but affectionate embrace. I have interested myself as I ought, in all the joys and sorrows which you have been pleased to communicate to me ; and I pray, and hope, that in future, fortune may not so frequently change from the first to the second. Take care, my much respected *Signora Giacinta*, not to trust too much to the falacious magic of poetry, when you wish to vanquish the chilness of philosophy. The enchantments of Parnassus have some efficacy in the theatre, supported by the harmony of the lyre or trumpet ; but are totally impotent when we dare to try their power beyond the limits of fiction. The magic which seldom fails, and which most infallibly governs the human heart, is that with which nature gratuitously furnishes you females, who without poring over books,
with

with a smile, a glance, a word, a studied negligence, perform daily such wonders, as the grass-hoppers of Helicon never have nor never will atchieve. Seek, therefore, among the vessels of your own dispensary, and you will certainly find a specific adapted to your wants."

Such politeness and gallantry from a man, in his eightieth year, to a female whom he had never seen, and at a period of time so near the total extinction of all *chivalry*, will surprise the present age, and perhaps offend the next.

This lady, a smatterer in natural philosophy and electricity, in a letter to Metastasio, having expressed her terrors at a slight shock of an earthquake at Bologna, in strong and violent terms, and her transports of joy on the opportunity which it had afforded for electrical experiments to illustrate the system which ascribes to that power this tremendous effect; the poet says: "I know not whether I ought to condole or congratulate you on this event. In christian charity, I ought to pray against earthquakes, but am afraid of offending you by wishing to deprive you of the pleasure of making experiments to demonstrate your favourite system. It would

would be a curious problem, that by its solution should prove, how your happiness could depend on earthquakes ; but then we must have recourse to philosophy : a name which you proscribe, abhor, and detest. So that in this dilemma, I perceive with what caution my form of prayer must be made, when, at the same time, I implore the extirpation of earthquakes, and the solid and daily encrease of that electrical power to which you declare yourself indebted for all your felicity."

The next literary female correspondent who sought the oracular opinion of the poet, in his old age, concerning her works, found him still more auspicious to her talents, or, at least, her vanity, than to those of any one of the Sappho family already mentioned, as the following letters will manifest.

L E T T E R V.

TO SIGNORA DONNA ELEONORA DI FONSECA
PIMENTEL.

THE poetical essays, particularly the epithalamium, of which you have obligingly favoured me with a copy, for the noble and harmonious facility of the versification, the
lively

lively images which animate and colour them, as well as for the abundant historical and mythological allusions with which they are enriched, would be extremely worthy of praise in themselves, apart from all other considerations ; but when we reflect on these being the first productions of a lady who has scarcely begun her fourth lustre (26th year) their merit is encreased to such a degree, as to become marvellous. You have very wisely foreseen, that such a usurpation of the rights of our sex, at my age, might perhaps have excited in me some degree of jealousy ; but with equal ingenuity and courtesy, you have administered the antidote, by assuring me, that you owe all the fermentation of your native poetical fire, to the assiduous perusal of my writings. I readily give credit, without examination, to this obliging assertion ; being extremely glad to unite to the duty of that justice which I render you, the interest of self-love. Continue to be the honour and envy of your sex, by advancing in a way correspondent to these wonderful beginnings, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, October 9, 1770.

Two years after, this young lady sends him more of her poetical compositions, which are praised by the veteran Laureat with equal warmth and gallantry. Indeed he adds to his encomiums the encouraging assurance, that she has greatly surpassed his expectations.

This correspondence continued till the year 1776; and he not only perseveres in praising her productions, but, at her earnest request, revises, and corrects small grammatical errors and poetical inaccuracies; a task to which he had always great repugnance, well knowing how much easier it is to praise a bad poem, than correct it.

But this lady not only consulted the bard, as the oracle of Apollo, with respect to her poetical compositions, but as the oracle of Delphos, in other important concerns; particularly on the subject of travelling, which is big with such inconvenience and danger to females, that she seems in the letter, to which the following is an answer, to have wished herself of the other sex.

L E T.

L E T T E R VI.

TO SIGNORA PIMENTEL.

AT the first sight of your last most obliging letter, I wished (in spite of my pacific disposition) for a good dose of Archilochian bile, to furnish me with a torrent of venomous Iambics against that evil genius, which having so long exercised his wicked power over the innocent hand of the gentle *Donna Eleonora*, has maliciously defrauded me of the pleasure of her correspondence. But upon a second perusal, and maturely considering this very lively letter, I find it abound with such excellent ideas, and seducing expressions, which, being unable in conscience to apply to myself, I am obliged to ascribe my happiness to that inconvenient and painful accident *, which like the banks of a river, had doubled the force of your usual eloquence. This true induction, indeed narrows the limits of my vanity, but not of my gratitude; of which the partiality of a courteous inhabitant

* The lady had hurt her hand by a fall, which had occasioned her long silence.

of Parnassus, who chuses me for the object of her poetical flights, exacts a very large portion. But remember, most amiable *Donna Eleonora*, that it is not always safe to trust to the light suggestions of fancy in your poetical paroxysms. What an unjust and ungrateful censure has it dictated against the poor innocent gown (female garb, petticoat) which invests the fair-sex with such convenience, pre-eminence, ornament and decorum ! and what are its crimes and defects ! Because it is an impediment to travelling ? and whither would you go ? and what to see ? would you fly from the warm *Sebeto* (*b*) to the frozen *Danube*, merely to have a near view of a miserable Roman ruin, placed there by accident, and with which, notwithstanding its distance, you are already sufficiently acquainted ; or would you traverse Asia and Africa, as far as the icy regions of Lapland, in order, philosophically, to combine the various inclinations and customs of the earth's inhabitants : and thus making a minute analysis of humanity, enable yourself (as you vainly hope) to form, in the Cartesian manner, a clear and distinct idea of it ? Both these

(*b*) A river in the neighbourhood of Naples.

enterprises are equally useless ; since the mouldering ruins, which excite in you such curiosity, are certainly not worth the trouble of so long a journey ; on the contrary, they would be of infinitely less value to you, when seen, than at a distance : as your imagination has the happy power of embellishing, unseen, whatever presents itself to your mind. And the undertaking to qualify yourself, accurately to define that strange compound of contradiction, called *man*, should be ranked in the number of impossibilities. As I hold it for certain, that there exists not an individual of the species, who does not every instant differ from himself ; and we may inform ourselves of those peculiarities, which are universally allowed, without quitting our country ; for though the cornice may be infinitely varied, the building is always the same. In every corner of the earth, men are equally the sport of their own passions. A taste for pleasure every where prevails : hence the indispensable want of society ; yet every one is conspiring against those restraints, without which society cannot subsist. All regard reason as the necessary attribute of human nature ; and all take her for their guide in the transactions of life ; but each moulds her to his own fancy
and

and convenience. So that I advise you, my much respected *Donna Eleonora*, to make peace with your gown, detaching your thoughts wholly from voyages so useless, and big with hardships and misfortunes; and to encourage no other wish or ambition, than that of distinguishing yourself among your peers, in the manner you have so happily begun. Cultivate your dramatic talents, and from the specimens which you have already given of your abilities, I not only hope, but venture to predict, your complete success.

Vienna, March 8, 1776.

Metastasio having unfolded and displayed in his dramas all the affections of the human heart, seems in his letters to female authors, to have exhausted the language of courtesy and politeness. The following letter, the only one in the collection to the same lady, seems in a different key, and higher pitch of respect and elegance, than any of those to his other female correspondents, already inserted.

L E T T E R VII.

TO SIGNORA DONNA CATTERINA MAGGI DE
CALVI.

IF the beneficent seducer, who has been able to inspire you, madam, with so much partiality in my favour, were known to me, I certainly should most devoutly address every species of prayer and supplication, to engage him to establish me in the possession of a blessing, which I have great reason to fear I shall be unable to preserve. The esteem of a person who voluntarily adds to so many excellent qualities of her sex, merely as accomplishments, those studies and laborious occupations which are our duties, is an acquisition, which, however usurped, might tempt the most mature philosophical moderation with vanity.

I have great reason to suspect that Signor *Hippolito*, your most worthy comfort, has been guilty of the whole, or the chief part, of this seduction—I know not whether it would be for my advantage to express my sentiments of gratitude and devotion in person; but am certain, that in spite of the risk I should run of
undeceiv-

undeceiving you, I cannot help wishing it most ardently. Continue to honour me with this favourable propensity, thus voluntarily bestowed: afford me an opportunity of meriting it, and believe me always, with due respect and esteem, &c.

Vienna, December 9, 1772.

In order to finish the poet's correspondence with literary Ladies, and Females of talents, we shall deviate a little from regular chronology. The following letters, like the preceding to females of this class, were extorted from him by persons whom he never saw, or by their friends. He seems, however, to have received all these applications, not only with patience, but to have answered them with good breeding, and even kindness; and if the correspondence is continued, his philanthropy visibly matures into friendship.

L E T T E R VIII,

TO SIGNORA MARIA ROSA COCCIA,

A FORTNIGHT ago, I received a courteous letter from Monsignor RATTI, in which

Signora MARIA ROSA COCCIA was recommended to me. I answered this prelate, that when I knew in what way I could be of use to the person recommended, I should not fail seconding the wish of such a mediator. A few days after I had sent my answer to the post, a parcel was announced to me from the custom-house ; which, when examined, was found to contain, not only a very elegant letter from the said Signora MARIA ROSA, but three excellent pieces of her musical composition, which I saw, and respected ; but was not able to judge of their worth. I therefore instantly called a person extremely skillful in the art, who, after carefully examining them in my presence, and with great pleasure, assured me, that they were written, not only in a correct, but masterly, manner. I rejoiced at this, and was flattered to find, that my dear country produced young ladies of such uncommon abilities. But I was mortified, at finding myself unable to procure such rewards, as are due to their merit. The princes of this court having, many years since, made a rule, never to receive a present, or dedication of any book, especially of poetry, or music ; to save themselves from the indif- creet torrent of such homages as they were
 formerly

formerly inundated with. Here music is, at present, in the last stage of decline ; and in order to know the merit of such a composition as yours, such knowledge is necessary as is possessed by very few people : hence all, but particularly those who may assume the character of Mæcenas, can only appreciate musical merit by the report of professors ; who being likewise men, and subject to human passions, do not alway deliver their opinions with sincerity. So that not knowing what use I can ultimately make of the elegant copies of your harmonical labours, I shall carefully preserve them till I have your instructions. I beg you will not regard my inability, (at which on this occasion I feel infinite concern) as a crime ; but believe me to be, with sincere wishes for more success in the execution of your future commands, yours, &c.

Vienna, December 29, 1777.

L E T T E R IX.

TO THE SAME.

Your former letters, most respected Signora Rosa, have informed me of your extrordi-

nary abilities in music ; but the last has convinced me of the uncommon goodness of your heart : full of docility, modesty, and propriety : virtues which seldom abound in persons who, like you, can afford such pleasure by the laudable fruits of their application. With these wonderful talents, with such enviable, and rare dispositions of the mind, and with the fervor which animates your exertions, you will encrease the glory of our country ; of which, as a fellow citizen, I shall imagine myself entitled to a share. The generous gift with which you have favoured me, of your neat manuscript, for which I am very grateful, shall be kept sacred for the pleasure of communicating it to such only as may know its true value ; and at all times shall be carefully preserved, and ready for restoration, whenever an opportunity may occur of making a better use of it. Your partiality towards me, I regard as a precious acquisition ; and long for an opportunity of meriting it, by the execution of your commands.

Vienna, February 12, 1778.

The chief subject of the next letter to this lady, (1779) is the poet's favourite censure
of

of the *compliments of the season*, which he denounces to almost all his correspondents.

In 1780, Signora COCCIA sent him a print engraved from her picture, for which the following letter contains his acknowledgments.

L E T T E R X.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR obliging attention, in furnishing me with an impression of the engraving made from your picture, has given me infinite pleasure; as it has helped me to form an idea of a person so estimable, in spite of the liberality of the engraver, who has bestowed upon you more years than really belong to you. I can, however, console myself for this defect, by the other most faithful intellectual pictures which you have sent me, in your wonderful musical essays, by which you have so far outstript your peers. I regard my verses with the more partiality, for having incited you to make so laudable a use of your talents. I am very glad that you have been informed of the justice which I render you at Vienna, and you would have had more frequent

frequent confirmations of it in my own letters, if my age did not make the business of writing so inconvenient to me. Furnish me, however, occasions for doing it with more effect.

Vienna, February 14, 1780.

L E T T E R X I.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR commands, most obliging Signora ROSA, convince me how erroneous an opinion you have formed of me and my way of life, in believing me alert and robust, and in the practice of frequenting the court and persons of high rank. It is a long while since my great age and infirmities have permitted me to quit the asylum of my own house, except to perform the duties of religion, and even that, not constantly. I have small hopes of seeing the Grand Duke and Dutchess of Muscovy, who are expected here. But if by an accident, hardly possible, such an event should happen, and I had the presumption, unsolicited, to propose to them an account of the singular merit of my admirable country-woman, how is it possible to hope, that after the million of objects

objects which will have taken possession of the mind of this prince and princess in their long voyage ; among the innumerable homages that will be rendered them at Rome ; amidst the feasts with which their presence will be celebrated, and the curiosity which they shall have excited, they should ever find the least trace in their memories, of an humble petition made to them in passing through Vienna ? Your wish should have been seconded at Rome, by persons dextrous in such matters, who know how to avail themselves of daily circumstances. I wish most ardently, that your fortune were equal to your merit ; and am extremely afflicted to be able at present to offer nothing better, than useless, though cordial, wishes, for your prosperity.

Vienna, September 6, 1781.

We must now resume the correspondence with his old friend Signor Filipponi, in which we had only advanced to the end of 1767.

The poet had such frequent applications from booksellers, who were perpetually multiplying editions of his works in all the great cities of Italy, particularly Turin, that he seems

seems to have treated Sig. *Rabj* with a little less politeness in the following letter, than, when a young author, he had bestowed on *Bettinelli*.

L E T T E R XII.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

Our Sig. *Rabj* does his duty in thinking of his own interest: but he is much mistaken, if he imagines that I am unmindful of mine, It is my business to judge of the respect and delicacy due from me to princes and princesses, who have rewarded my labours with such splendid magnificence. The oracles and examples produced, are not sufficient to authorize me to dispose of things that are not my own; hence, my dear Sig. Filippone, advise him to imitate my resignation.

I participate sincerely in your affliction, at the unexpected resolution which your exemplary son has taken; but who knows, whether in his new state of perfection, he will not afford you such cause to rejoice, as will repay you for your present grief with interest? I both wish and hope it sincerely,

The

The Gazettes must have informed you of our earthquake and inundations. The first, which happened in Vienna, was only tremendous threats, without the least fatal effect; but in the neighbourhood of the city of *Neustadt*, the consequences have been very serious. Yet the furious over-flowing of the Danube, thanks to the paternal goodness of our most august sovereign, who with hand and heart has assisted the wretched inhabitants of the deluged suburbs, has not produced those tragical effects which were justly apprehended: so that the evil has been infinitely less than the fright, from which we have not yet recovered. Adieu, my dear friend; take care of your health, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, March 7, 1768.

L E T T E R XIII.

TO THE SAME.

You have done wisely, my dear Sig. *Filippini*, to spare yourself in writing. I shall venture to take the same liberty, as I feel too plainly, that though ours is the best time of life for prating, it is very unfavourable to writing; but, in this country, an Italian ama-

amanuensis, to whom a man can safely dictate, who wishes that his letters may not disgrace him, is a fish very difficult to catch ; so that I prefer short letters, or silence, to the greater evil of losing my credit or my patience.

My poor Pegasus has trotted and galloped so much, that being now full of spavins, he ought to eat his corn in quiet. My most indulgent patrons will, I hope, consider his crippled state, and not soon oblige him to crawl up the mountain. At present, I have no orders to obey ; and I have reason to rejoice at my escape.

I had almost inadvertently let my pen be guilty of wishing you a happy new year ; such is the force of bad habits ; but thank heaven, I stopt just at the instant I was going to slip. So that I shall not only avoid this stale and injurious formality, but am certain, that you will forgive me for the aversion I have to so silly and troublesome a custom.

Count *Canale*, with all his ample and flourishing family, have received your testimonies of esteem, with the highest pleasure ; and beg, reciprocally, to interchange good wishes ; permit me likewise to offer up vows for every branch of your family, sacred, and
profane,

profane, whom I love, reverence, and honour, with all my ancient entire, and incorruptible affection.

Vienna, December 31, 1768.

L E T T E R XIV.

TO THE SAME.

God forgive you ! my dear friend, for predicting the necessity of my clambering again up mount Parnassus. After so many journeys, stumbles, and falls, does not it yet seem time for my poor jaded Pegasus to eat his last feed in peace ? Instead of taking new steps (as you say) towards immortality, the progress already made on the road, is lost, when we dare to transcend the bounds which nature has prescribed to miserable humanity. I already, but too well, know this melancholy truth, and wish to profit from my knowledge ; but how am I to resist the constant and benignant clemency, which overlooking my insufficiency, still wishes to confer benefits upon me. —

Vienna, July 3, 1769.

L E T T E R X V .

TO THE SAME.

I SHOULD not know how to account, my dearest friend, for the admiration with which you have honoured my letter concerning this Imperial family, if I did not reflect, that it contained nothing but plain truth, which, appears most beautiful, when the least embellished (i); my vanity, therefore, will allow me to take to myself no part of the praises you bestow on this fortunate letter. They have, however, so far excited my curiosity, as to make me wish to see its contents. I therefore applied to a young man, who used to transcribe some of my letters previous to their departure, as an exercise in the Italian language, which he studies with great diligence; but it was not to be found in his bundle. Whether he

(i) Notwithstanding the democratic clamour against the tyranny of the House of Austria, in later times, the inhabitants of Vienna, during the life of the Empress Queen, *Maria Theresa*, who died 1780, seemed the happiest, and the most contented with their Sovereign and her government, of any people in Europe. For instances of this Princess's virtues and benevolence, see *Dict. Biogr.* art. *MARIE*.

omitted

omitted giving it a place there for want of time or inclination, I know not. I should have the same temptation to justify your favourable reception of the trifle I wrote on the English Armonica (*k*); but it is most prudent not to enter too deeply into this useless and perilous examination. Indeed if you had convinced me (as you might too easily have done) that this little production, is unworthy of applause, I should still have reason for some consolation; as the having already obtained it without desert, would be a comforting proof of the numerous band of friends and defenders which my good fortune has procured me; and I am much more sensible of this enviable acquisition, than of the choicest laurels of Parnassus.

Adieu, my dear Sig. *Filipponi*; I return you the compliments of the season, in revenge; singing in pure spite, this stale and useless cant among real friends.

Vienna, November 16, 1769.

The talents of our two countrywomen, the Miss Davis's, who resided a considerable time at Vienna, in the same house as Haffe and

(*k*) The *Glasses*, carried to Vienna, and performed upon by the eldest Miss Davis.

Faustina *, have been celebrated by our bards; the eldest, for her performance on the *Glasses*, at that time a new instrument; and the youngest, for her vocal abilities. The Empress Queen had been so pleased by their several talents, that in the year 1769, on the marriage of the Infant Duke of Parma with the Arch-duchess Maria Amelia, she desired Metastasio to write a Cantata, which was set by Haffé, in order to display their several talents. This Cantata has been published in late editions of the poet's works, under the title of *L'Armonica*, the name of the new instrument on which the eldest Miss Davis accompanied her sister, in the performance of the Cantata.

A letter written by the poet to the princess di Belmonte, at Naples, recommending these performers to her protection, will serve as a comment to the Cantata just mentioned.

L E T T E R XVI.

TO THE PRINCESS DI BELMONTE.

THE bearers of this most reverential address, are two English young persons, travelling under the conduct of their worthy pa-

* See *Present State of Mus. in Germany. &c*, Art. Vienna, rents,

rents, in order to give testimonies at Naples of their several abilities in music; their names are Miss Mary, and Miss Cecilia Davis: the first performs with admirable skill on an instrument of new invention, called the *Armonica*. It is composed of glasses of different sizes, revolving, by means of a pedal, on a spindle. These glasses, forming a regular scale of tones and semi-tones, being delicately touched with wet fingers, during their revolution, produce the most uncommonly sweet, and celestial tones, imaginable; particularly in pathetic strains, for which the instrument is eminently calculated. The other sister, who is possessed of a very pleasing and flexible voice, sings extremely well, with much art and natural expression; and when accompanied by her sister on the *Armonica*, she has the power of uniting her voice with the instrument, and of imitating its tones, so exactly, that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish one from the other. They have been here universally admired, and applauded: and my most august Patrons, who has deigned to hear them frequently, has honoured them with munificent testimonies of imperial approbation.

Vienna, January 16, 1772.

Miss Cecilia Davis performed in the theatre of San Carlo at Naples, the part of *Bradamante*, in Metastasio's new opera of *RUGIERO*.

L E T T E R XVII.

TO SIGNOR FILIPPONI.

YOUR letters, my most dear Sig. *Filipponi*, always afford me the greatest comfort, in reviving the idea of our long, sincere, and disinterested friendship, and of that honourable character, so worthy of yourself, which I have always found so irreproachable; and this certain knowledge renders every thing dear that comes from you, even to the insult of a merry Christmas; I therefore thank you for it, and in revenge, join the same wish for you, with others which ought not to be profaned by being coupled with such stupid and vulgar companions.

I am overwhelmed with confusion and gratitude, at the partial and generous disposition of your obliging and learned friend, in wishing to honour me with the dedication of his *Lusiad* (*l*). I therefore beg of you to

(*l*) *Or the Discovery of India*, an epic poem, by LUIS DI CAMŌENS. It does not appear who was the translator of this poem into Italian, who so much wished to dedicate his version to Metastasio.

express

express to him the lively and sincere sentiments of my grateful heart, and my impatience to see transfused into our language by a masterly hand, a work which has justly merited universal approbation; but after this true and candid assurance, use all your eloquence, I entreat you, to convince him, that neither the nature of the gift, nor his own interest or mine, can permit me to accept of it. The opulent sons of fortune, among whom it has not pleased providence to rank me, have acquired a right by immemorable prescription, to all dedications; and both the work and the author (by substituting to some great name, that of a poor inhabitant of Parnassus) would be deprived of the well founded hopes of those solid advantages which he might promise himself from riches and power. An honour so little my due, would provoke the malevolent to examine my titles; and God defend me from such a dangerous enquiry! In short, having hitherto, for this invincible reason, always refused the acceptance of such incense, I have lost the power of compliance, if I would not most deservedly incur the indignation of those by whom it has heretofore been offered: Do you, my dear Sig.

Filippini, endeavour to prevent this most reasonable repugnance from diminishing the partiality of this worthy man of letters, which I would not lose for the world.

Sig. *Canale* is very sensible of the interest you take in the recovery of his son-in-law ; and has consigned to me, on your account, a thousand grateful and affectionate expressions. Contrive to let the venerable priestess know how much I love, esteem, and honour her, as well as your numerous offspring, sacred and prophane, *et nati natorum, et qui nascuntur ab illis* ; and never cease to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, December 17, 1770.

L E T T E R XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

AMONG the many flattering receptions of my RUGGIERO in Italy (*m*), who was not

(*m*) The opera of RUGGIERO, the last of the poet's dramatic productions, was written by order of the Empress Queen, and published under his own eye, in a most correct and splendid edition in quarto, at Vienna. It was set by Haffé, and performed at Milan, on the marriage of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, with Maria Beatrice of Este, Princess of Modena, 1771,

brought

brought up by his old fire with very sanguine hopes, yours, my dear Sig. *Rilipponi*; has been the most grateful. I am pleased that you have still found in this late production of my tired and exhausted genius, some features of the old countenance of your friend; and I have reflected with the highest pleasure, on the effect of this recognition upon your good heart. These kind symptoms of sincere friendship, have carried me back with infinite delight to our juvenile days, renovating the pleasing beginnings of our affection, and its constant successive progression. My lively imagination has taken a new walk with you through the *strada Giulia*, and the dark *Parrafo* upon the *Gianicolo*, at Rome; we have breathed together the chearful and salubrious air of the *Vomero*, at Naples; and it has represented to me our private festivities, innocent symposiaks, and poetical confabulations. You see for how many gay ideas I am indebted to your letter; I now ought to be particularly grateful for them, as I have great occasion for such specifics against the obstinate persecution of my hypochondriac complaints, which tinge with darkness every thought.

Without the least shadow of affectation, I am truly grateful to those who have had the partiality to wish to dedicate to me their works; but have never had the courage to accept of an incense which from time immemorial has appertained to the opulent sons of fortune. We poor inhabitants of Parnassus are born to offer, and not to receive it; and I ought not to be condemned for refusing to become a usurper. I entreat you to become my advocate, and to plead my gratitude and reasonable self-denial.

Vienna, December 26, 1771,

We quitted the poet's correspondence with his beloved *Gemello*, Farinelli, July, 1768, after settling him at Bologna, and after several consolatory letters, and admonitions to fortitude and resignation (not very successful indeed) had been sent to him by our bard. We shall now resume this correspondence, and continue it, uninterruptedly, till May 1769; from which period there is a chasm of seven years in the printed edition of Metastasio's letters to this celebrated singer, without any reason being assigned by the editor.

L E T.

LETTER XIX.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

THE kind care which my beloved *Carluccio* (n) took to acquaint me, in preference to so many others, of the new form which your domestic society takes, in consequence of your generosity, and the suggestions of your heart and benevolent mind, is a precious emanation of our affectionate and indissoluble Twinship. I cannot express to you the pleasure which this confidence has given me, nor sufficiently congratulate you on the occasion. In the first place, it is a great comfort to me to find in this action, the constant and admirable character of my dear Gemello, always like himself, and always determined to distinguish himself from common men by beneficence, which is one of the greatest attributes of the divinity. I hope, in the second place, or rather promise myself, that

(n) The diminutives and augmentatives of the Italian language are so delicate and numerous, that it is in vain to attempt finding equivalents for them all, in any other tongue. *Carlo*, for instance, is Charles; *Carlino*, little Charles; *Carluccio*, dear sweet Charles—*Carlone*, great Charles; *Carlaccio*, nasty filthy great Charles,

the

the necessary and delightful occupations which the regulating this rising generation furnishes, will, by degrees, banish all those gloomy and hypochondriac thoughts, which incessantly haunted and governed you, day and night; threatening your destruction, to the profound, but unavailing affliction of your friends, unable to afford you any assistance.

At present, instead of these melancholy imaginations, I cannot tell how many pleasing and happy ideas crowd into my mind. I see you healthy, serene, and making your whole happiness consist, as usual, in procuring that of others: You are now full in my view, with your dear nephew at your side; I now see you at the harpsichord with your noble little niece. And very very often (only mind how the fancy of poets runs away with them) I seem to see you skipping round your flourishing beds of peas, beans, and other fortunate tender plants, which will certainly thrive in proportion to the care of so honest, prudent, and friendly a cultivator. Now, my beloved Gemello, there only remains for me to thank you, as I sincerely do, for your particular attention to me; and to rejoice with you at your having discovered
a better

a better mode of reading my heart, where you have so long been an inhabitant, than I of explaining it, by scribbling or prating.—

Adieu, my dearest Gemello : may heaven render you happy in proportion to my wishes, and administer to you new motives of consolation.

Vienna September 1, 1768.

LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

SIGNOR *Mancini* (o) a few days ago, and Sig. *Tibaldi* yesterday, have faithfully consigned to me the affectionate remembrances of my beloved Gemello ; and have patiently answered all my numerous interrogatories, concerning the present state of your humour, as well as health. Some of the information I have obtained has consoled me, particularly that which represents you so much satisfied with the new domestic

(o) A singer of the Bologna school, educated under the celebrated Bernacchi. His voice a *soprano* ; but having quitted the stage, he was now engaged as singing-master to the Arch-duchesses, which place he filled in 1772, when I saw him at Vienna. See *German Tour*, vol. 1. Art. Vienna,

society

society which you have acquired, and the pleasing occupation which it affords you : but, on the contrary, the account which I have had of the obstinate continuance of your impertinent tertian ague, afflicts me extremely. And finding that your niece is not exempt from this wearing malady, has made me reasonably conclude, that some external cause, common to you both, has occasioned your indisposition. If this should have been the case, it would not be difficult to discover and remove it. My fond *twinism* has suggested to me, that you pass the chief part of your time in the open air ; that the autumnal exhalations, and the poisonous vapours of a great part of our country, is not breathed with impunity ; that the air of paved cities is much less impregnated with this poison, not only from the exhalations of the earth being impeded, but from the numerous and constant fires, as well as the motion of the inhabitants, which agitate and correct the air. And I beg that the necessary care of your health, may set you a thinking of these matters which friendship has suggested to me. Take them into consideration, my dear Gemello, and examine my suspicions : If you find them at all probable,

bable, avoid exposing yourself, at least during the perilous season. I well know that your conduct has been such hitherto, as to prove that you are in no want of tutors, and that I pretend to no such employment; but this doubt torments me, and if I did not communicate it to you, I should be ten times more tormented with remorse.

I congratulate your amiable niece on her happy maternal state, and her spouse on the graduation of his paternal proximity. Recommend me to them both, and inspire them with a proportion of your affection for me: as they are already extremely dear to me from the love which my Gemello bears them, whom I tenderly embrace, and of whom I shall ever be most faithfully, &c.

Vienna, November 30, 1768.

L E T T E R XXI.

TO THE SAME.

OUR extreme close attachment to each other is so public, that every one believes, if he is dear to one of us, that he is sure to possess the friendship of both. Signora Marianna *Bianchi Tozzi* (*p*), who aspires at

(*p*) A celebrated opera singer, who at this time ranked very high in the favour of the public, both in Italy and Germany.

the

the acquisition of your favour, which she has no doubt of obtaining, if I only assure you, that she is already in possession of mine : and I cannot refuse her the confession of this truth. When, not long ago, she represented in this theatre, the part of *Clelia* in my opera of that name, I was extremely pleased with her ; not only on account of her excellent performance, and blameless conduct, but for her attention and indefatigable application to fulfil all her duties. She returns to Italy, at present, through Brunswick; where, according to my accounts, she has justly received universal applause. If you will but let her know that her supposition is not entirely unfounded, I shall be extremely grateful, provided she does not fail in executing punctually all the commissions to you, with which I have charged her. Adieu, my dear Gemello. I devoutly reverence all your amiable domestic committee, and am as usual, yours.

Vienna, December 14, 1768.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXI*.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR last letter of the 9th instant, occasions a mixture of pleasure, anxiety, and affliction, which I am unable to describe. The obstinacy of your diabolical fever, the pathetic picture of the state of your perhaps too good heart, and the affectionate thoughts which stimulated you to add new ties of friendship to those which have hitherto so indissolubly united us, are ideas well worthy of the sweet and bitter tumult with which I am by turns internally agitated. It was impossible for you to give me a stronger proof of your constant affection, than by inviting me to a sacred alliance, in preference to so many distinguished persons to whom you might apply. You must therefore imagine how much I feel myself obliged; and how I am flattered by this new instance of the place I hold in your heart. But as there is no perfect happiness in this valley of tears, the pleasure of finding myself thus distinguished by you from the crowd of your

3

friends,

friends is disturbed by an invincible impediment, which opposes itself to the execution of your design. The never having represented the personage of whose office you kindly think me worthy, during my long life, would be a small obstacle in treating with my Gemello; but the misfortune is, that besides the number of persons to whom I have excused myself, it is not two months since I resisted the solicitations of a person much connected at court, and who would have a reasonable cause for being offended, if after refusing him, I complied with the request of another; and the resentment of this person would not only be unpleasant, but might be mischievous. Nor is it possible for me to flatter myself with keeping it a secret; the hoping to conceal any of our actions, who are as well known as the North star, would be a Platonic idea. So that your part, my dear Gemello, is not only to pardon, but pity me, the loss being wholly mine; and my part will be gratefully to remember, as long as I live, what you thought and wished.

In spite of the hurry with which I am obliged to write a heap of useless letters, I cannot forget to present my respects to the
fruitful

fruitful lady who honours me with her notice, and to assure her, that by anxiously attending to your health, she will add to that of yours most faithfully.

Vienna, January 23, 1769.

L E T T E R XXII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH your most welcome remembrance of the 12th of last February, was only an answer to my preceding prolix letter, I cannot postpone my reply to it, nor restrain my abuse, which your inhumanity well merits, for the manner with which you have treated my solicitude. You know in what a state of mind the account of your obstinate fever must have left me; and without assuring me that you had at length sent it to the devil, you content yourself with merely saying, that your health is capricious. But in spite of you, I find motives of consolation in the steadiness of your hand-writing; in your silence itself; and, above all, in the vivacity of your letter, which is not tinged with a febrile humour. But it is not out of character for a marine

monster to reduce a Gemello to console himself, by having recourse to conjecture. Thank heaven, in these days of penitence (Lent) I remember, like a good christian, that anger must be subdued, otherwise I should not let you off so easily ; but mind ! and keep yourself well, if you wish my rage should not be renewed.

If, at this time of our lives, you could doubt of my sincerity, or I of yours, we should be unpardonable. I have seen your invitation in no other light, than as a tender proof of your friendship ; and you would be extremely unjust and ungrateful, if you could suppose I had any other latent reason for declining the offer, than that which I have candidly stated. So that you have not the least occasion to repent of the friendly eagerness with which you have so much obliged me ; nor I to blush at my involuntary backwardness, in accepting of your twinly offer. Therefore, in spite of wild and unworthy conjectures, let me enjoy in peace, the pleasure which this new proof of kindness has afforded me, of knowing how I stand in your good heart.

I envy Signora *Bianchi*, and Monsieur *Lofier*, who have ere now seen and embraced
my

my dear Gemello. O that I could do the same! But though I cannot see the least probability of it ever happening, I cannot relinquish the hope.

Vienna, March 2, 1769.

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

Muger paridera, hija la primera (q) I therefore congratulate you, my dearest Gemello, on the safe and certain fecundity of your amiable niece, and of the prowess with which she has happily accomplished her first maternal expedition. Accustomed to live among the Graces and the Muses, You ought to be pleased, that, under your auspices, their chorus is going to be augmented, and that fortune has dextrously afforded you an opportunity of manifesting your gratitude, by rendering them a due return for that education which you are so publicly known to have had from them. I entreat you to express my sincere joy to the mother, in the most significant words which you can think

(q) The woman is a good breeder, who begins by bringing forth a girl. *Span. Prov.*

of ; and my tender affection for the child, by a hundred kisses at least : as this right which I claim from our twinnship, cannot, at present, be susceptible of any malignant interpretation.

A friend, well knowing, like all living mortals, my affectionate eagerness to be acquainted with every thing that concerns you, has anticipated your information, and obliged me extremely by his diligence ; but that has not, however, inclined me to blame your delay. To insist on a rigorous exactitude of ceremonial from a poor gentleman just brought to bed, would be unreasonable to the last degree ; particularly, from one whom, from long experience, I know to be possessed of such a mind and heart, that it would be difficult to decide, during the throes of child-birth, whether the sufferings of the niece, or those of the uncle would be the greatest. But now you have vanquished the difficulty of this first apprenticeship, I hope you will have frequent occasions for exercising your courage, with much greater ease : and am, as I have ever been, and ever shall be, your most faithful, &c.

Vienna, May 1, 1769.

L E T T E R XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

ON Monday evening, the first of the present month, I sent my servant Josia to the post-house, with my letter of congratulation for your happy *labour*, when he brought me back, in exchange, a confirmation of the good tidings in your own hand-writing, dated 21st of last April; I found, after the pleasure which the perusal afforded me, another pleasure, in perceiving, that your affectionate and impatient twinship had seduced you to take the pen, during the first mysterious days of your parturition: I am extremely grateful, for the justice which you have done my solicitude on your account; and accept, with all due gratitude, the enviable friendship, and patronage, of Signora *Maria, Carlotta, Anna, Teresa, Petronilla*, to whom I beg of you to quintuple, on my account, in proportion to her names, the embraces, which I consign to you for her use, by virtue of our most close (because elective) affinity: promising to reimburse you in current coin, whenever it shall please

God to permit us to see each other; a hope, which notwithstanding all the difficulties, I do not mean to renounce. There wanted but a little Eresypulus to try your patience, which for a long time has certainly not been idle. O my poor Gemello!—but I recal this exclamation: such mortals as you are in no want of compassion. Your virtue has afforded sufficient proofs of your knowing, not only how to sail before the wind, but how to tack in contrary winds, without loosing your steerage. And yet, though I will not degrade you by my pity, I cannot help praying for your tranquillity. I live in the greatest intimacy with my most constant complaints: What would you have me do? It is keeping bad company, but I might have worse. Present a million of kind compliments from me to your dear niece, but qualified with the respect due to her sublime rank among matrons: and never cease, on your own part, to return the affection of your, &c.

Vienna, May 4, 1769.

Though the poet's letters to the learned and worthy *Padre Martini*, contain nothing
of

of importance to general literature ; yet to lovers of Music and its history, nothing that concerns this venerable *Maestro di Capella*, can be indifferent. For such, therefore, we shall give a translation of the following short letters; to whom they will probably afford some pleasure, from the mere circumstance of two such men being in friendship, and correspondence, with each other.

L E T T E R XXV.

TO PADRE MARTINI.

THE unexpected misfortune which has happened to the worthy Abate *del Monte*, which must already have arrived at your knowledge, is universally lamented ; it has retarded many days the pleasure of receiving your most obliging letter of the 7th of last January, which was delivered to me only last week. I sent a servant to him immediately, with sincere offers of my services in any way in which it was possible for me to be useful ; and he brings me back the comfortable news, that he was as well as it was possible for a person to be, with a

broken leg : which seems to say, that the cure will not be slow, nor be attended with any inconvenient consequences. As soon as ever he is visible, I shall visit him in person, in spite of near two hundred steps, which it will be necessary to ascend, in order to attain his aerial habitation.

I am extremely impatient, not only for the second volume of your most learned *History*, but for the *Duets* and *Trios*, which you make us hope : and I should be extremely proud, if I were able to furnish you with any thing inedited towards your laudable undertaking ; but whatever I write, being by order and for the use of the court, is performed and printed immediately ; or, if suspended by some accident, the production is laid by for a future occasion ; and I am not at liberty to publish it.

Take care of yourself, for the honour of our dear Italy ; and believe me always, with the most just and respectful esteem.

Vienna, February 22, 1768.

LET-

L E T T E R XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

I FOUND on my table, a few days ago, the second volume of the most learned work of my very worthy *Padre Martini*; and this morning, an admirable letter from him, without knowing who was the benevolent bearer. But as I could not be ignorant of the friendly and generous hand from which such a precious gift, and such an obliging letter, came, I hasten to acknowledge the instruction I receive from the one, and the pleasure afforded me by the other. I shall profit from this work, as much as the narrow limits of my musical knowledge extend; and shall procure that justice to be rendered to it, which is due to the oracle of harmony. After these effusions of gratitude, my next business is to entreat the continuance of your partiality, as if I could still doubt of it, after the testimonies which I have received. But it is my duty to assure the illustrious donor, of the high estimation in which I hold his gift, and of the lively
with

wish with which I am impressed, to merit, in some way or other, his obliging attentions.

Vienna, March 4, 1771.

L E T T E R XXVII.

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY was consigned to me, by Signor *Antonio Baroni*, the new dissertation *De usu progressionis geometricæ in Musica*; and with the utmost eagerness I instantly began the perusal: but I soon saw that it was a kind of reading that I was not qualified to go through with, hastily. With due attention, I hope, however, to acquire from it all the pleasure and instruction of which my intelligence is capable. In the mean time, accept my most grateful thanks for the precious gift: wishing you, reverend and learned Sir, a long enjoyment of that life and health, which you so laudably employ in increasing the lustre of our country; believe me to be with affection, gratitude, and esteem, &c.

It will probably afford some gratification to the lovers of English poetry, who are zealous for the honour of our countrymen, to be made acquainted with the effect which
a perusal

a perusal of an Italian translation of Young's *Night Thoughts*, had on a man of Metastasio's exquisite taste and sound judgment. There is only one letter in the collection, addressed to the person to whom the poet confides his sentiments.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

TO DOCTOR GIUSEPPE BOTTONI.

I HAVE perused with avidity, and infinite pleasure, which I never expected to receive from excess of melancholy, the first six *Night Thoughts* of the celebrated poet Young, in your elegant version; and am extremely grateful to you for enabling me to have a knowledge of the English Muses, in spite of my involuntary ignorance of this excellent language. Thanks to your assistance, I have understood, and admired, these poems to such a degree, that they did not seem at all to have changed their dress. I have not observed in your translation, any of those uncertain and servile strokes of the pencil, which usually distinguish a copy from an original; and am persuaded, that if the sub-
lime

lime author had sung on the banks of the Arno, he would have expressed his thoughts in that flowing, clear, and noble manner; and with that constant and varied harmony, with which you have so wonderfully translated and enriched him. I can easily comprehend what infinite pains such a difficult task must have cost you; but it seems well worthy of your labour. The extraordinary merit of this excellent writer appears, even in his defects; for notwithstanding the want of order and connexion, his frequent repetitions, determined obstinacy in always shewing the dark side of every object, and unwillingness to conduct us to virtue by any other way, than that of despair; in spite (I say) of these oppressive circumstances, he seizes on the reader, and transports him just whither he pleases.

He always thinks for himself, profoundly, and with grandeur. His colouring is vivid, vigorous, and splendid; so that the abundance of his beauties, makes us overlook his imperfections; as we are too much dazzled by the magic of Reubens's colouring, to see the defects of his design.

May the favours of Apollo with which you have been blessed, continue during the progress

progress of a work so admirably begun ; and may I be still indulged with your partiality.

Vienna, May 23, 1771.

To the following correspondent of this period (1771) no more than one letter seems to have been preserved ; but as we obtain by it Metastasio's opinion, on a subject as curious in politics, as that of the preceding letter in poetry, it seems well worthy of insertion here.

L E T T E R XXIX.

TO SIGNOR D. GIACOMO MARTORELLI.

I never doubted, Sir, but that Baron *Van Swieten*, in his answer, would render you all due justice ; but I am extremely pleased to see my expectations so fully verified in the copy transmitted to me, and to find in what high estimation your opinions and writings are held by so enlightened a judge : as you may place entire confidence in the approbation bestowed upon you by a man so candid, frank, and of a temperament so entirely hostile to flattery.

I am extremely obliged, as you may well imagine, by the trouble which you have taken to send me the epigram lately come
from

from the Island of Barataria(*r*). Your civility to it inclines me to imagine, that you think it my own; it will not therefore be decent for me to pass sentence upon it, having not yet learned to swim or fish in the troubled waters of critical seas. A very learned adept in the imperial library, to whom I communicated the epigram, believes the author of it to have been a Greek and not a Roman: founding his opinion upon the error which, according to him, cannot be that of the stone-cutter, and upon some phrases which seem to him transposed. I shall procure a copy of the literary journal of Florence, and without fear of being deceived, shall believe what is there determined concerning it.

With respect to this part of the world, literature of every kind is a merchandize for which there is no vent; and the physical reason for it is, the enormous and ruinous military system, which obliges the sovereigns, whether they will or no, in order to defend themselves from each other, to impoverish both themselves and their subjects. And as there is no other road by which individuals can expect advancement, so princes would be

(*r*) Alluding to the translation of a Greek Epigram, which afterwards appeared among his posthumous works.

thought

thought reprehensible curators of the public security, if the least part of that revenue were appropriated to the honour of Minerva, which is hardly sufficient for the expences of Mars. And this too indisputable truth, is the clear solution of innumerable problems, my dear Sig. Martorelli, which appear inexplicable.

Vienna, August 19. 1771. (s)

Of the many prints engraved of Metastasio, I have never seen one that did justice, either to his features or expression. And the Poet, in the following letter to a Roman painter, who applied to him for a print, or the copy of a picture, which resembled him the most, seems to have thought himself little obliged to the artists who had made him the subject of their labours.

(s) The reader will recollect, by attending to this date, the situation of Germany at the time these reflexions were made: the long and ruinous war between Austria and Prussia, and the mutual jealousy which those powers entertained of each other, seem to have discouraged and banished almost every art, but that of slaughter. But now, in greater danger from the arms and principles of France, than the fears or ambition of each other, though united among themselves, their whole attention and resources are necessarily pointed to the security, not only of the government, religion and laws of the several states, but the possessions, liberty, and lives, of individuals, more important and solid blessings, than literature or the fine arts!

LET-

L E T T E R X X X .

TO SIGNOR FRANCESCO CARDINALI.

FAME, which blazons the merit of others, however constant and universal, is, however, but too frequently the mere effect of chance and good fortune: hence that which procures me the favour of your choice, may very probably be of this kind; but too rigorous an examination into motives, may not be for the advantage of my self-love; and being indebted to good fortune for the acquisition of your partiality, I should not have sufficient courage to take much pains, in analyzing and destroying it.

Impressed with a due sense of my obligation to you, for the honour you do me, by wishing to give my portrait a place among the illustrious men whom you propose to copy, I cannot, in gratitude, help praying to heaven, that by thus exalting me, you may not disgrace your own taste and judgment.

It is most certain, that my picture in the observatory of the Arcades at Rome, was sent thither by myself, from Vienna, at the request of Prince D. *Sigismondo Ghigi*; and likewise that it was carefully copied from that which

was

was once thought to resemble me the most ; but it seems as if I had no great reason to be proud of it. In that which I inclose, you will find the features of my peruke and band perfectly expressed ; but not those of my face.

Yet it did not seem useless to send it, as external, but true circumstances, however trivial, frequently contribute to suggest the air of an absent countenance.

Vienna, December 9, 1771.

There are several short letters of civility in the collection, from the bard to this painter ; who seems to have merited his esteem, by the modesty and respect with which he addressed him.

“ The candour and modesty with which you express yourself, have not only confirmed, but considerably encreased my esteem for you : as these qualities have their intrinsic and real value, without the assistance of opinion or chance. I congratulate you on the possession of such qualities, and perhaps more on my own account than yours, as they have rendered the possession of your partiality a more valuable acquisition. ”

The following letter of this period, will afford the reader an opportunity of knowing

Metaſtaſio's ideas of a perfect *Canzone*, or detached ſong of many ſtanzas.

L E T T E R XXXI.

TO THE MARQUIS CARLO VALENTI,
*upon a Canzone written by P. Sanbonifacio, the
Jeſuit, on the Empreſs Queen's birth-day.*

WHOEVER was the author of the *Canzone* which you have been pleaſed to ſend me, has great reaſon to be grateful to the muſes for the partial aſſiſtance which they have afforded him, in this pleaſing and ingenious production. It is at once poetical, clear, noble, harmonious, rich in imagery and ideas, and manifeſts, throughout, the effects of that art, which the writer ſo dexterouſly and perfectly has contrived to conceal. But what has afforded me the moſt pleaſure, is the author's exquiſite judgment, which diſcovers itſelf both in the choice of his ſubject, and in the ſkilful manner of arranging his materials; which he has diverſified without multiplying them, and formed into a whole, where nothing is wanting or ſuperabundant; I congratulate him on his ſucceſs; and while I render
you

you my best thanks for this new and obliging testimony of your remembrance, permit me to remind you of the constant and ancient respect, with which I have always been, and ever shall be, &c.

Vienna, June 10. 1771.

We shall now return to the Poet's correspondence with Sig. Saverio Mattei of Naples, with whom he generally discusses literary subjects more amply, than with most of his other correspondents.

L E T T E R. XXXII.

TO SIGNOR SAVERIO MATTEI.

THOUGH you always avail yourself of a period equal to the time which I have suffered to elapse in answering your last letter, I submit with patience, while I know you are fulfilling the duties of a parent and a philosopher. And I rejoice extremely, that you have quitted the tiresome toils of the bar, which obliged you to exercise your talents at the expence of more luminous and fruitful employments; I hope these are the preludes to a series of auspicious events; and that, for once,

fortune will be obliged to unite with justice, in favouring merit.

I perceive the partiality of friendship in all you say of my *Ruggiero*; and the pleasure which this discovery affords me, is a consolation more flattering, than the consciousness of superior merit could produce. But whatever my poor drama may be, its worth will certainly receive no encrease by the respect shewn to the Singers of the present times; reduced by their own fault to the rank of performers of *Intermezzi*, or buffoon interludes between the several dances, which are now become more interesting than the acts of an opera. For the Dancers having usurped the art of counterfeiting the affections, and of representing human actions, have justly acquired the attention of the people, which the others have as justly lost. For contenting themselves with grating the ears of the audience with a vocal *Sonata*, which is called an Air, often very offensive, they leave to the Dancers the task of occupying the mind and heart of the spectators, by which they have reduced our theatre to a shameful and intolerable jumble of incongruities.

Vienna, May 30. 1771.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH I am become callous, by long use, to the mangling of my poor dramas, yet your friendly compassion, in preventing monstrous wens from springing out of my *Exio*, has obliged me extremely. The *Quartetto* which you have written, is decent, convenient, and happy; and if it is well treated by the composer and performers, I believe it will have a good effect in the representation. Indeed it will render the second act somewhat barren of airs, in which the two principal personages will have but one song a-piece: which would have been thought sacrilege, when I wrote the opera; but at present, when the heroic Singers have ceded to the Dancers the precedency of representation; and when, by virtue of this cession, they are degraded to the performance of a kind of *act tunes* between the several Ballets, the more a drama is cut down, the less matter remains to exercise the patience of the spectators. On the other hand, it is a false supposition, that I ever wrote a *Quartet* for *Exio*, or that I ever re-

quested one; though it is most true, that I am,
and ever shall be, &c. &c.

Vienna, September 18, 1771.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE already received advice, that a copy of the fourth volume of your Psalms, directed to me, is on the road; and I feel the utmost impatience for enriching myself with the possession of this new treasure. Not doubting but this will surpass in merit its elder brothers: as the extraordinary vigour of your genius, is constantly on the increase, though its former efforts surpassed the common standard.

I had hoped, that your friendly complacency would have seconded my well-known repugnance, (whether it proceeded from weakness or reason) to the publication of my private letters. But I see, that availing yourself rigorously of the rights which your merit gives you over my will, you have freely gone to work, and spared me the distress of doubtful deliberation. The worst of it is, that by acting in this manner, you have manifested an opinion of my productions far above their value, for which I know not whether I ought to grieve or rejoice. Yet

I know

know extremely well, that whatever vexation it may have cost me, my sufferings are superabundantly paid by the enviable friendship of one like you : wishing therefore for its continuance, I am, &c.

Vienna, March 15, 1772.

L E T T E R XXXV.

TO THE SAME,

I HAVE run through the fourth volume of your admirable version of the Psalms, which you have so obligingly sent me, with avidity, attention, delight, and profit, from the title-page to the sage and learned letter, which you have addressed to the *Abate Sparziani*; and find myself amply rewarded for the long impatience with which I was tormented, during the expectation of their arrival. All seem extremely worthy of the preceding volumes; nay, perhaps from the force of novelty, some of your reasoning, as just as unexpected, has struck and surprised me still more effectually. In the 90th psalm, (our 91st) for instance, not only the lively and bright colouring of the translation, but the admirable dissertation on the *Meridian Dæ-*

mon, (*t*) from whose insidious arts, in order to be able to defend myself sufficiently, I have learned from you even to doubt of my own existence: the happy apology with which you exonerate David (pf. 109th) from the odium of the atrocious imprecations which are usually attributed to him, so injuriously to his benign character (*u*): the noble

(*t*) "The sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day." pf. 91. v. 6. Signor Mattei, after giving the different opinions of the fathers and commentators on the *Meridian Demon*, seems chiefly to adhere to the opinion of Grotius, as the most simple solution of the difficulty; who supposed this *Demon* to imply the SUN, *qui itinerantibus in Palestina maximè letalis est*. This idea was very likely to strike an Italian, who dreads nothing more than *il Colpo del sole*: "the arrow that flyeth by day." (v. 5 of the same pf.) or more vulgarly, *the noontide devil*. The pestilence inflicted on the Greeks at the siege of Troy comes from the *Sun*:

The insulted fire (his God's peculiar care)
To *Phæbus* pray'd, and *Phæbus* heard the prayer:
A dreadful plague ensues; th' avenging darts
Incessant fly, and pierce the Grecian hearts.

POPE'S II. b. 1. 494.

The *mall' aria della notte*, or "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," is likewise a figurative expression, that is very intelligible to the inhabitants of hot climates.

(*u*) This is done by assigning to the *Enemy* of David, the imprecations of this pf. from v. 5. to 18. instead of supposing them to come from the royal Psalmist himself; who

noble facility and features of the original *Etruscan lamentation*, which you have had the dexterity to transfuse into our language; the fine poetical fervor which reigns in the 82d psalm; the clearness and connection which has been discovered in the 84th, 86th, 105th, and 113th psalms; the variety and spirit of the imagery with which the representations of nature are described in the 102d and 103d psalms; the truly beautiful, as well as moral short cantata, into which you have compressed the 99th psalm; the drama which you have so ingeniously discovered and demonstrated in the 117th psalm, and (not to tire you with an account of the whole volume) in short, every thing has surprised me to such

who says, v. 3. "For the love that I had unto them, lo, they take now my contrary part: but I give myself unto prayer. Thus have they rewarded me evil for good: and hatred for my good will."—Then follow the maledictions of his enemy—after which, v. 19, he retorts the curses of his foes on themselves. "Let it thus happen from the Lord unto mine enemies," &c.—This solution is so easy and satisfactory, that it seems wonderful not to have been at all times the general opinion of divines and commentators; but the first time that I found this opinion supported, was by the late learned and Rev. Mr Keate, in a sermon which he preached at Chelsea College Chapel, before either of us had seen Mattei's Psalms, and when I had only discovered in this letter of Metastasio, that an apology had been made for David, by Saverio Mattei, without knowing in what it consisted.

proofs

a degree, and furnished me with such new proofs of your enviable vigour, vast learning, and numerous and wonderful talents, that I shall very frequently repeat the perusal of this volume, being always certain of acquiring in it, new instruction, and new pleasure.

I ought to bestow a word or two on the gratuitous praises with which you so generously honour me, in your printed letters, and in the course of this work.; but these certain proofs of your partiality are not able to appease my remorse at such a usurpation: so that not to awaken it, I assure you of my serious gratitude; but as laconically as possible.

You have been pleased, at all hazards, to enrol me among *Controvertists*, by printing my letters concerning ancient music, which I had most privately addressed to you, in pure obedience. God forgive you! but for my own part, I cannot; nor shall I ever dissemble my invincible repugnance to a business so superior to my physical powers, as well as abhorrent to my disposition and inclination. Console me, Sir, at least, by the continuance of your affection, and judge of mine, by the resignation with which I am, &c.

Vienna, April 7th, 1772.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXVI.

TO THE SAME

I DIRECT my letter to Naples, whither I hope you are at length returned, after four months absence; a time equally taken up by your books in travelling, which you sent to me before your departure, but which only arrived here last week. Indulging my impatience, I began with your theatrical dissertation, to which I gave the preference for a thousand reasons. It is a sublime work, and worthy of you; nor is it admirable merely from the profound learning of the writer, but much more so from the marvellous knowledge of the most recondite mysteries of the stage, unknown to the majority even of those who profess the art. But what flatters me the most, is the accidental coincidence of our notions concerning the ancient and modern drama. The spontaneous opinion of one like you, gives me courage, and renders me proud of my own: and I now regard those learned, but most inexpert critics, who differ from us, as entirely confuted. If I were to undertake the pointing out all the passages of your dissertation that

are

are worthy of praise, this letter would not only equal it, but surpass it, in size. The solid demonstrations with which you have removed all the insuperable difficulties in understanding the poetics of Aristotle and Horace, sufficiently to render them useful in practice: the art with which you have exposed the absurdity of reducing the unity of place, to the narrow limits of a chamber or closet: the torrent of passages from Greek dramas, with which you justify and compare our dramatic *Airs, Duets, and Trios*: the happy as well as difficult version of the beautiful scene in the *Hecuba* of Euripides: the generous modesty of giving the preference to my cantatas over your own: the masterly analysis of the first scene of *Artaxerxes*, and that of *Sextus* and *Titus*: and every one of your sage philosophical considerations, would require a prolix and distinct chapter. But, begging your pardon, I cannot, however, approve that manifest excess of partiality, in my favour, which reigns in every period. You, by this means, expose yourself to the contradictions of those who have their reasons for not being of your opinion: and at the same time, expose your friend, by the most violent temptations of vanity, to quit
that

that modest course which it is his duty to steer, temptations from which he is the less likely to defend himself, when assailed by a person armed with such learning and seducing eloquence.

I should say much more, if I did not fear that my most sincere praises would run the risk of being construed into a mercantile restitution of those with which you have voluntarily honoured me ; so that, embracing you with my usual affection, I commit to your perspicacity, the care of investigating, and of figuring to yourself, my esteem and gratitude.

After the above was written, your letter, dated from Naples, arrived. Besides the usual faculty which all your letters possess, of consoling, exhilarating, and of meriting my gratitude ; this last, which informs me of your happy return to Naples, in perfect health, after a long and inconvenient peregrination, has every title to my thanks ; as it assures me, that no inauspicious circumstances have thus long deprived me of the satisfaction of hearing from you : as your family cares and affections, have had a considerable share of your time, of which you kindly gave me an account, and as the excessive impetus of

some expressions of friendship in this letter enables me to judge of that regard which occasioned it. I am extremely grateful, as indeed I ought to be, not only on these accounts, but for the assurance with which you have gratified me, of the favourable remembrance of the admirable princess of *Belmonte*; yet concerning the instances which you give, I must in all modesty and decorum be silent.

O how many sweet and exhilarating ideas has your account, my dear Signor *Saverio*, of *Magna Græcia*, awakened in my mind! Renovating all the happiness of childhood and adolescence, which I enjoyed in that country, no less useful than pleasing! It has brought again to my view all those objects with which I was then so much delighted. I have again inhabited the little chamber where the extreme proximity of marine murmurs lulled me for many months, so delightfully to sleep. I have, in fancy, crossed the neighbouring sea in a bark to *Scalea*: all the names and aspects of *Cirella*, *Belvidere*, *Cetraro*, and *Paola*, have been brought back to my mind: I have again heard the venerated voice of the celebrated philosopher *Caroprese*, who adapting himself, in order to instruct me

me, to my weak state, conducted me, as it were by the hand, through the vortices of the ingenious *Descartes*, at that time in high favour with philosophers, and of which he was a furious asserter; and indulging my childish curiosity, now demonstrating with wax, in a kind of sport, how globes were formed by the fortuitous concourse of atoms: now exciting my admiration by the enchanting experiments of Dioptrics. I seem still to see him labour to convince me, that his little dog was only a machine: and that the trine dimension was a sufficient definition of solid bodies. And I still see him laugh, after plunging me for a long time in dark meditation, and making me doubt of every thing, in proving that I breathed, by his *Ego cogito, ergo sum*: an invincible argument of certainty, which I despaired of ever again demonstrating.

But you have roused a hornet's nest, so that I find myself as much surrounded by remembrances and a wish to communicate them, as you by the literary and law cases with which you were assaulted at your return: so that not to rob you of the time necessary for these more useful and necessary
 confi-

considerations, I embrace you affectionately,
and leave you in peace.

Vicenza, September 1, 1772.

L E T T E R XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

IN your obliging letter of the 12th of last October, you courteously thank me, dear Sir, for the pleasure and profit which I had received from the attentive perusal of the fourth volume of your illustrious and learned work. Now who would not purchase the right of a creditor upon such easy terms? You, however, continue to give me similar opportunities; but assure yourself, that you will always encrease the load on your own shoulders by such debts. For my part, I shall repeat all I have formerly said, adding, that, among other things, I have particularly admired the masterly, instructive, and very elegant sonnet, which I have met with at the end of the observations upon the 110th Psalm; and have there observed the natural analogy, which is usual between plants and their fruits. I beg of you to congratulate

gratulate the respectable author of it, in my name, when you have an opportunity ; as I now felicitate you yourself on the tender, grateful, and exemplary disposition of your own good heart, towards so worthy a father.

I am sorry that your engagements at the bar, have confined you to the city, and deprived you, this year, of the refreshment of your usual autumnal holidays in the country. But this convincing proof of the just reputation which your abilities have acquired, a little softens the idea of many present inconveniences, by thinking of those splendid and tranquil advantages, which I so ardently wished and presage. When, very long ago, under the direction of the celebrated advocate and, afterwards, counsellor, *Cassagnola* (*), I kept these courts myself, I learned the following axiom, which I have never since found reason to doubt: that the fields of *Themis*, (goddess of justice, law,) produce in the beginning to the cultivators there (in Naples) nothing but knavery and mere fatigue ; but, afterwards, in the middle of their career, when indeed they have other labours,

(*) This is the Neapolitan civilian, whom most of Metastasio's biographers called *Paglietti*.

but which produce fruits proportioned to their toils, they luxuriate in a spontaneous and constant fecundity, exempt from labour. From their last desirable stage I believe you, my dear Sir, at present, not very remote. I beg you to respect and fulfil my vaticination; and to persevere in believing me to be, &c.

Vienna, Nov. 9, 1772.

END OF THE SECOND SECTION.

SECTION III.

IT was in the Summer of this year, 1772, that I gratified both my curiosity and my heart, by frequently visiting and conversing with the great lyric bard at Vienna; and though an account of these, to me, most agreeable visits and conversations, has been already given to the public in my *German Tour* (vol. 1.) yet I shall here try to recollect what has been omitted in that relation.

During my residence in that city, I discovered that the poet was not more admired for his extraordinary public talents, than beloved and respected for his private virtues and character. The few innocent singularities which have been ascribed to him, for which he frequently accounts in his letters, were so amply compensated, by his constant probity, politeness, friendship, and philanthropy, that I heard nothing but his praises from persons of every rank, whenever his name was occasionally mentioned. He seems to have supported dignity without pride; and to have acquired universal admiration without vanity or indirect means. His private,

tranquil, and unvaried habits of life, allowed him no opportunities for the practice of those sublime, splendid, and heroic virtues of courage, patriotism, magnanimity, fortitude, clemency, and beneficence, which he has so admirably described and illustrated in his dramatic works; but there can be no doubt of their existence in his heart, whence his sentiments so manifestly appear to have flowed. The private, domestic, and social virtues of filial and fraternal affection, friendship, philanthropy, urbanity, probity, honour, and general benevolence, seem never to have been practised with more constancy and devotion, than by our bard; who has been as justly, as emphatically, called, by one of his countrymen, not only *the poet*, but *the philosopher of the heart* (y).

The monotonous manner in which he spent his life during his long residence at Vienna, has been ridiculed, and thought insipid, by perturbed spirits; but to the admirers of his writings and virtues, it will not be indifferent to know how he passed his time, which was in a way so regular and constant, that there were few persons at Vienna unacquainted with it.

(y) *Elogj Italiani*, Tom. I.

He

He studied daily from eight o'clock in the morning, till noon, Then visited his friends, and those families and individuals from whom he had received civilities. Dined at two; and at five received his most familiar and intimate friends, At nine, in Summer, he went out in his carriage, visited, and sometimes played at *Ombre*, a game which he liked better than those of mere chance, as it afforded him some exercise of mind in calculation. Men accustomed to think, make their amusements contribute to mental improvement.

He returned home at ten o'clock; supped, and went to bed before eleven. In his conversation he was constantly chearful; fanciful, playful, and sometimes poetical, in his discourse, as well as in his letters; never sarcastic or disputatious; totally devoid of curiosity concerning the public or private scandal in circulation, the morality of his sentiments resembled that of his life. His answers were elegant, acute, and ingenious; occasionally learned without pedantry; and full of interesting and applicable anecdotes of past and present times. In confidence with few, but polite to all. His affection for his countrymen was great, and extended

to ecclesiastics, painters, musicians, poets, and ministers of Italian states, who were all sure of his kindness and good offices. His liberality was exactly proportioned to his means: he seemed to wish for wealth for no other purpose than to supply his own wants, without superfluity, and those of necessitous friends. He presented the *Improvvisatore* Talaffi, with twelve Sequins, and recommended him to the attention of the great, for higher patronage. His character was never stained with any vice, or illiberal propensities. His sensibility inclined him to the passion of love; but as it was sincere, it became a bridle to itself, and a stimulus to virtue; as his whole life and writings have manifested.

*Un amour vrai sans feinte et sans caprice
Est en effet le plus grand frein du vice;
Dans ses liens qui sçait se retenir,
Est bonnête homme, ou va le devenir.*

VOLTAIRE.

The surest check to pravity of mind
Is love sincere, to no caprice consign'd;
Whoever in his heart admits the guest
Or has no vice, or soon will vice detest.

“From

“From a natural love of order and regularity (says the Abate Taruffi) (z) even to scrupulosity, he used invariably to perform the same offices each day at almost the same instant ; and in his own defence, he would tell those who contemned such exactitude as contracted and frivolous, that he had always found the regular distribution of time, not only contributed to bodily health, but to serenity of mind.”

Among his most agreeable evening occupations, the literary conversations with his two ancient and confidential friends, *Count Canale*, and *Baron Hagen*, seem to have held the first place ; these grave and learned personages, eminent for erudition and probity, were attached to him by all the ties of good taste and similar affections. Greek, Latin, Italian, and French writers of the first class, continued during many years to exercise the critical acumen of this illustrious triumvirate.

Among the lively sarcasms against our innoxious bard, it has been said, that the small-pox, old age, sickness, and death, were never

(z) *Elogio dell' Ab. Metastaso*. The author of this Eulogium lived in the greatest intimacy with the poet at Vienna, during many years.

to be mentioned in his presence; but we find them all frequently mentioned in his letters, by himself.

Even his not learning the German language during the many years he resided at Vienna, admits of some apology. His favour at the Imperial court, and fame throughout Europe, depended on his Italian poetry; and it is most probable, that he was fearful of corrupting his native language by using another, too frequently, in conversation. Every Englishman must know, that all foreigners who reside a considerable time in our country, if they learn our language sufficiently to converse in it, soon loose the purity of their own, by a mixture of the two tongues, and by frequently thinking in the one, and speaking in the other. I have never known a French governess, or teacher at a boarding-school, who, in six or seven years residence here, has not lost as much of her own language, as she has gained of ours. It is the same with professed language masters; of whom, if I wished to learn a living language with correctness and purity, I would, *cæteris paribus*, prefer him who had come last from his own country. At Vienna, Italian is more generally spoken than

than French, particularly among strangers, and the *Corps diplomatique*. Indeed on account of the Austrian possessions in Italy, there are generally more Italians in the capital of the empire, than French ; so that Metastasio had no occasion to learn German for the sake of conversation, though he had acquired according to his own account (*a*), the names of necessaries in that language, *per salvar la vita*. And I am inclined to believe, that it was neither the harshness of the Teutonic dialect, nor the difficulty of learning it, that so much prevented or impeded his acquiring it, as the fear of corrupting his own.

But as his friend and correspondent, Sig. *Saverio Mattei*, says (*b*), "whoever would have an exact account of his customs, manners, way of thinking of himself and others; of the fulfilling his duties, the vicissitudes of his fortune, his application, and the degree of success with which his works were at first received, with their influence on the public taste of Italy, and on every lyric stage in Europe, can only find them in his

(*a*) *Musical Tour through Germany, &c.* Vol. I. Art. VIENNA.

(*b*) *Memorie per servire alla vita del METASTASIO*, 1785.

LETTERS ;

LETTERS ;" we shall proceed to select, extract, and translate, such of them as still remain unnoticed, concerning the subsequent part of his life.

L E T T E R I.

TO SIG. SAVERIO MATTEI.

HAVING no experienced and trusty correspondent in *Trieste*, I have not been able to avail myself of your sage counsel in fixing on a commissioner there, who would undertake to receive and forward to Vienna, the box which you have sent by that road ; but I am acquainted with persons here, who are on very friendly terms with the consul in that city, Sig. D. *Giovan Battista Orlandi*, and I have already obtained a promise of his assistance with respect to the box in question ; so that we have reason to hope for better fortune from the present expedient than the past. The advice which you give me of the precious contents of this box, makes me very impatient for its arrival ; after which you shall have transmitted to you, an exact relation of the pleasure and profit which this acquisition shall have produced. In the mean

mean time, I beg of you to deliver, in my name, all due acknowledgments to the most worthy counsellor *Patrizij*, for the generous alacrity with which he has seconded your beneficent intention of enriching me with his excellent writings; and assure him of my sincere respects. I have read with equal delight and admiration, your new, eloquent, sage, and learned dissertation, upon the Dramatico-Lyrica poetry of the Psalms; and I do not see how it is possible, that oppressed as you are with the enormous weight of so many legal, professional, literary, and domestic cares, you are able to preserve entire and equal to yourself, that wonderful vigour of mind, which is necessary to the continual production of new works, as valuable for their correctness, as genius and variety of knowledge. Then I know not how to express to you my satisfaction, in finding such an exact coincidence in our way of thinking, concerning the affinity between the ancient and modern theatre, and that, without the least communication with each other on the subject. In an extract from the poetics of Aristotle, which I have lately augmented, and in which I have endeavoured to combine the dramatic precepts of this
great

great philosopher with my own but too long experience; and likewise in the notes which I am going to amuse myself with writing to my old translation of Horace's Epistle to the Pisos, I see, that your reasoning and mine set off from the same source, though they meet in concurrence by mere accident; and the spontaneous opinion of such a one as you, puts me in humour with my own.

I am sorry that your well-known partiality in my favour, should expose you to a participation of the vigour of the learned author of the Roman daily *literary journal* against me, whose impatient sincerity has manifestly *me* for object, and not *you*; but the opportunity which it has afforded you of becoming by this last production more wonderful, and more celebrated, and me of being able to boast of such an instance of your affection, certainly demands our gratitude more than resentment. To say the truth, I should rather have expected from my country, a defence than an attack; but it is just that all private regard should give way to the advantages of public correction. As for myself, my dear Sig. Saverio, who am rendered callous and impenetrable by old habits (good
or

or bad) contracted by an uninterrupted use of more than half a century, and in which I have been indulged not with an accidental, but constant favour of the public, it would be manifest injustice in me to pretend to see or feel the necessity of the proposed corrections; and upon the inutility of admitting them, you have written with so much learning and solidity, that I should be utterly unable to add any thing to your reasons, which would not be repetition and superfluous. Assure yourself, therefore, that my affection for you encreases, in proportion to the new and illustrious proofs which I receive, from day to day, of your friendship.

Vienna, March 11, 1773.

L E T T E R II.

TO THE SAME.

IN short, we must never despair. For when I had relinquished all expectation, that the box of books, which you had kindly directed to me so many months ago, would ever arrive, the inclosed letter of advice from a courier of *Trieste*, most unexpectedly informed

informed me, that all its contents had long been in the possession of *Ratrop*, the druggist at Vienna. I sought, and found him. He has consigned to my messenger, the book of counsellor *Patrizj*; and the music of the Psalm, set by Sig. *Cafarò*, with six volumes, that is to say, two copies of the three first volumes of the new edition, in octavo, of the poetical books of the bible; and all this; not only without a box, but without any kind of envelope, or direction, to inform the druggist how to discover to whom these goods appertained. It will now be of no consequence to investigate the cause of this disorder: I shall therefore indulge my impatience, and immediately proceed to give you an account of the effect which your precious gift has produced in me, though hardly *summis labiis degustatum*.

—— I began by reading the first consultations of the very worthy counsellor *Patrizj*, nor did I desist till I had entirely admired them all. I am extremely obliged to you, for having enriched me with such a treasure; and I entreat you to inform the illustrious writer, of my true respect and gratitude, for the honour he has done the republic of letters, and his country.

Of the masterly Psalm, by the celebrated *Cafaro(c)*, it does not become me to speak. It is an acquisition for Signora Martinetz to appreciate, not me. She seized, played, and sung it, the instant it was received in my presence; and it appeared too short. We returned to it, and tried it again the next day, more deliberately; when she discovered in it new beauties, and determined to study it constantly for her improvement in harmony. She has commissioned me to render you a million of thanks, for your kind attention; and I join to them my own acknowledgments, for the pleasure which I have received myself in hearing this admirable music performed.

I have still to speak of my new obligations to you, for enriching me with duplicates of the second edition of the three first volumes, of your most learned book. I have already examined them, though *festinanti oculo*, and find that this edition is more elegant, more convenient, more ornamented, and more rich than the first.—The beautiful octave stanza, the learned dissertation on the *traditions* that have been preserved, &c. and

(c) Sig. CAFARO, an excellent Neapolitan composer, in a correct, solid, and masterly style.

what

what you have added, are all worthy of you, and extremely applicable to the subject. But what has interested me most, is an unexpected portrait, elegantly drawn, of my dear Signor Saverio, and that which he has so well delineated; in words, of his most worthy father. I have been pleased to find in the features of the first, particularly in the eyes, a perspicacious vivacity beaming from the mind; and that exemplary filial tenderness in the exposition of the second, which renders visible the excellent heart of the painter.

But amidst so many motives of satisfaction, I cannot conceal my chagrin, in perceiving what a number of my letters you have published, in spite of my continual prayers and remonstrances to the contrary. If, Sir, you had believed them sincere, loving me as you always seemed to do, you would not have manifested your affection by continuing so constantly to afflict me; so that I am convinced you must regard my antipathy in the same light as Virgil did the shyness of Galatea: *Quæ fugit ad salices, & se cupit ante videri.* But if such is your opinion, you are mistaken, Sir, and wrong me very much. My timidity, I know as well as you, may

may be carried to excess, but not to hypocrisy; and, at present, you ought to have a better opinion of my heart. Pardon, or rather receive kindly, this transport of scrupulous friendship, in which all dissimulation is culpable; but still continue to love your,
&c.

Vienna, May 22th, 1773

LETTER III.

TO THE SAME.

THE violent tension of my nerves, particularly in the head, and hypochondriac affections, which at this time of the year plague me insufferably, and deprive me of all activity, and power of application however slight, have not abated my eagerness to read your philosophical and very learned dissertation on music; and I have determined to give it a second perusal, for which I shall be well rewarded, as soon as I am able to undertake it with less heroism. In the mean time, let me confess, that the partiality in my favour, which runs through all your writings, if it does not convince me of my merit, assures me of your love; and I am ex-

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tremely

tremely grateful for so dear and valuable a possession.

The truths which you assert concerning modern theatres, with so much eloquence and learning, are so evident and incontestible, and have been but too long remarked with indignation by myself, that in a fit of disgust, I determin'd upwards of fifteen years ago, never to enter any theatre again, except that of the court, which for my comfort, is now wholly shut up. When abuses are arriv'd at their highest excess, nature, and the instability itself of human affairs, alone can cure them. You may flatter yourself with the hopes of seeing this change, but not I; so that it is more your business than mine to endeavour to hasten it.

The ingenious and lively *scherzo poetico* (poetical flight) for the ensuing festival, which you have been so obliging to send me, is worthy of the occasion. I have perus'd it more than once, with that pleasure which I always receive from whatever comes from your pen; and I constantly find new cause of admiration and envy, at the fecundity with which you treat every subject, however barren and common in itself. I pray heaven to preserve you, and forgive the abuse of that
vigour

Vigour which it has granted you, by allowing yourself no kind of relaxation amidst such numerous and different applications. Wishing for the continuance of your affection, I remain, &c.

Vienna, December 3, 1773.

As no more than two letters from our Bard to this spirited and voluminous writer, remain to translate and insert, though their dates are posterior to those which are still behind, addressed to other persons, we shall finish this correspondence; as the letters being chiefly on learned and critical subjects, are too much connected by reference to each other, to be separated without fatiguing the recollection of the reader.

L E T T E R I V.

TO SIG. SAVERIO MATTEI.

THERE is no occasion, my dear D. Saverio, to reform any of the versions of the Psalms which you have obligingly sent me, they being already so advantageously adapted for the reception of music. I am truly sensible of the labour which you must have had in selecting

passages favourable to *Airs*, *Duets*, and *Trios*,
 and in faithfully compressing into them the
 sense of the text, without losing that noble,
 clear, and elegant smoothness, so necessary to
 music, so easy in appearance, and so difficult
 to attain. But do not repent of your fatigue.
 It is concealed in a masterly manner ; and you
 have fully accomplished what you proposed ;
 so that, at present, every composer will employ
 in these *Psalms*, both the species into which
 Aristotle divides music ; that is, the *plain* and
florid (as the ancients in the *diverbia*) using in
 the *Recitatives* the first, which is so simple
 and unadorned, that it is sufficiently formed
 by the mere cadence of the verse ; and in the
 second, the more ornate, which acquires the
 name of *Melody* in our *Airs*, as the ancient
 did in the *cantica*, *monodia*, *strophes*, *antri-*
strophes, and *epods*. This melody is formed
 (as you very well know) principally from
rhythm or *numbers*, of which the metres
 are a part ; but these metres do not con-
 stitute rhythm, if not arbitrarily varied
 and compounded by a combination of pe-
 riodical measures, which are invented, with
 more or less felicity, by musical com-
 posers in proportion to their genius and
 abilities ; hence arises that alluring and in-
 finite variety in the *Airs* of different masters

to the same words, in the Subject, Movement, Style, Passages, or whatever you are pleased to call them. But the convenience which composers will find in setting your Psalms to music, is manifest and endless; being now furnished with rhythmic poetry, instead of the mere accents of prose, which they were obliged to seek and expand or contract into measure, for the sake of their melody. I congratulate you on your success in this enterprize, and myself, in finding that, without previous discussion, our opinions constantly coincide.

I cannot forgive you for unjustly calling your eloquent and learned letter, to the journal of Modena, mere *babble*. Such injustice merits reparation, and of the same kind as that of Longinus, who having called the events of the *Odyssy* of Homer mere dreams, immediately repents, and adds: but *they are the dreams of Jove*. If, however, I was disposed to censure you, I should perhaps say, that the occasion did not merit such pains. But every thing merits pains, when there is any one, who like you, can turn every subject to general instruction, as well as to the increase of his own fame. All your letters which I have found in the sheets

which you have sent me, are extremely worthy of the writer ; but particularly, the elegant, reverential, and decorous Latin epistle, addressed to the *Servus servorum*. In short, there is no literary province in which you are not a citizen.

But do not, my dear D. Saverio, imagine the same of me ; for if I had not a small place in Parnassus, I should perhaps find a habitation no where else. What can I therefore say to you about the various essays on legislation, by yourself and others, with which you have so obligingly furnished me ? It is true, that I discover facts in them, that have been mentioned in your works, and try to understand them ; but I shall never have the courage to discover my opinion of them*. If a poet may be allowed to judge of the eloquence and historical part of a work, I shall say sincerely, that I have read with infinite pleasure, the life of the Marquis *Frangianni*, written with elegance, and judgment, and reduced in the most difficult form of a

* The late Dr. Johnson, having been shewn a proof-sheet of the *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, by the Editor of *Metastasio's Life and Letters*, said to him,—
“ Sir ! the words are well arranged : but I do not understand one of them.”

continued dedication to the learned and sage reports and cases in jurisprudence, of counsellor *Patrizj*. I should wish to this great and most worthy friend, the same and fortune of his celebrated master *Fragianni*; if I did not already discover that the first is prepared, and that he is not far from the other: I shall therefore rather form wishes, as you are inferior to none in merit, and in the universal esteem which that merit has acquired you, that vanquishing every obstacle which envy may throw in your way, you may compel fortune to join in rewarding your virtue. Continue, in the mean time, to honour me with your regard, and to assure yourself, of the high estimation in which I hold your extensive knowledge, and wonderful talents; and that I shall be always, &c.

Vienna, January 15, 1774

LETTER V.

TO THE SAME.

I AM extremely obliged to you, my dear D. Saverio, for not suffering me to remain in ignorance, of your elegant and excellent poem on the birth of our Saviour. In its con-

tracted form, the rich mine from which it has been drawn is discoverable. Such masterly miniatures sometimes cost the more trouble, in proportion to the necessity of concealing it, in these poetic labours, more than in any other. I have communicated it to several persons. All applauded it, and I am flattered by the confirmation of my own opinion. I am told, that an edition of your Psalms, is already printing at Padua; see that this most happy Canzonetta is inserted in one of the volumes: as these short compositions are soon lost, when printed separately. I am impatient to see this Patavinian edition, of which I am told, and much more, the many corrections which you say you have made in those places, which did not satisfy your extreme fastidious taste, though so universally approved by others. The learned men of that seminary, make me hope that the edition will be extremely correct; and I wish it as much success as I do the magnificent edition of my own works, which is now preparing at Paris.

The cold, horrid, and obstinate winter, with which we are still struggling, is not at all favourable to my hypochondriac affections: the poor nerves suffer more than usual,

usual, and require a greater expence of patience than my capital can afford. However, there are people who bear petrification heroically ; but the trade of a hero is a cursed trade.

I am extremely grateful for the valuable acquisition, which your golden writings have procured me, of so valiant, learned and celebrated a champion, as the Abate *Cesarotti* ; whose vast knowledge, sublime genius, and wonderful activity, I have long admired, in every species of pleasing and profound literature. I am only sorry, that he has armed himself with my trifling works against our foreign foes ; but the smallest twig in such hands, becomes as formidable a weapon as the club of Hercules. Adieu my dear friend. Take care of yourself, and believe me ever, &c.

Vienna, February 15, 1779.

Among Metastasio's literary correspondents, whom he never saw, or had heard of, till made acquainted with their existence by a present of their works, was the Abate **MAZZA** ; who, in 1766, sent him two poetical essays, accompanied with a letter, which
the

the imperial laureat acknowledged with his accustomed urbanity. Indeed though neither the writings, nor the name of this author seem to have penetrated into our country, the elegant and warm encomiums bestowed on them, by so exquisite a judge, deducting for mere civility and fear of offence, excite curiosity and an eager wish to be acquainted with them, "I have read the whole of your present," says he, in his first letter to this Abate, "and almost re-read, with the pleasure and admiration which productions so rich and elaborate deserve. You have no occasion for my vote, to be sure of a distinguished place in Parnassus. Your own talents, learning, indefatigable application, and smiling time of life, render your election certain. What may we not expect from a soil, which produces such exquisite fruit, at a period when flowers can hardly be expected? I can see no obstacle which can check your flight, but want of volition. Natural disposition armed with such various knowledge, wants only self-confidence, to enable you to quit the tracks which have been so long beaten by others, and finally to seek in your own judgment the true paths to utility and delight.—You must
 " not

“ not expect that I should speak of your elo-
 “ quent and flattering letter, nor of the
 “ magnificent sonnet which accompanies it.
 “ In speaking of either, vanity would appear
 “ through the transparent mask of humility.”

In 1771, after praising in very strong terms, some other poems which this author had sent him, Metastasio adds : “ I congratulate you sincerely on your success in
 “ these productions ; and from the small portion of prophecy which I may claim as an
 “ old priest of Apollo, I venture to predict,
 “ that you will appear to posterity, one of the
 “ brightest ornaments of the Italian Parnassus.”

Again, the same year, he says to this young poet : “ from the superabundant return of praise with which you honour me,
 “ in your last letter, I begin to fear that my
 “ approbation of your lyrical compositions
 “ has been regarded by you, more in the light
 “ of gratitude than justice ; therefore to
 “ avoid every expression that may be construed into panegyric, I must tell you with
 “ historic simplicity, that you have wonderfully united the lively flashes of genuine
 “ poetry, with the minute philosophical
 “ analysis of the essence and activity of that
 “ harmony

“ harmony which is sought in all the operations of nature.”

And finally, in 1773, he tells his poetical correspondent, that he had repeatedly read “ the three odes on the effects of music, the hymn to the Creator, and the two sonnets to his sovereign on the commencement of the new year, and always with new pleasure and admiration; and instantly discovered in the richness of the metal, the mine that had produced it. To such poetic eloquence, always big with ideas, always sonorous, sparkling, and equal to yourself, it is not permitted for every inhabitant of Parnassus to aspire”—but the bard entreats him not to risk the disgrace of his judgment, by excess of partiality to himself, or provoke his readers to examine his merit too minutely.”

If a specimen of Metastasio's elegant and polite acknowledgment of unsolicited favours from new correspondents was necessary, perhaps his first letter to the Marquis *Andreas* might be selected, as a model of its kind.

L E T T E R VI.

TO THE MARCHESE LODOVICO ANDREASI,
OF MANTUA.

RETURNING home the other day, I found on my table an elegant casket, big with most valuable merchandise, and delivered without direction or letter. Upon enquiry, my servant told me, that as far as he could gather from the bearer, it was a present from the Marquis Andreasi: but he was unable to discover the name of the benevolent commissary, who had undertaken to have it delivered to me: and he therefore still remains incognito. This circumstance discovers the author. And who else would have thought of giving me such a sweet, and flattering testimony of his remembrance, which alone, without embellishment, is always sufficient to fulfil the measure of my ambition? For if this contrivance had no other merit in my eyes, than the having employed your thoughts on me, for a few minutes extraordinary, I should think myself in a particular manner indebted to it.

Now

Now you have so well sweetened my existence by your gifts, forget not to honour me with your commands, and give activity to the respect and gratitude with which I have the honour to be, &c.

Vienna, June 24, 1773.

We shall now return to his old confidential friend, Sig. Filipponi, secretary of the university of Turin.

LETTER VII.

TO SIG. FILIPPONI.

THE prolix enumeration of the amiable and respectable qualities of this Count *Scarnaggi* which you have detailed, my dear Filipponi, with such seeming pleasure in your last letter, is but a repetition of what I had long since learned from our friend Count *Montagnine*, who was perfectly acquainted with his merit, and flattered me with the hopes, of some time or other procuring me the honour of so valuable an acquaintance.

My

My self-love does not rise to such a height, my dear friend, as to believe my private letters fit to see the light, having been written in haste, and sent away without ever being read by myself. The rapacity of printers, who make not the least scruple of enriching themselves at the expence of an author's reputation, have attempted, without my permission, in Naples, Florence, and Bologna, to publish a collection of them ; but thank heaven, I was apprised of their intention time enough to prevent their putting such a design in execution, and shall continue to prevent them in future, to the utmost of my power.

The manifest inattention with which your royal press (at Turin) has published the tenth volume of my poems, does not make me wish to see an eleventh volume printed with equal negligence ; you will therefore believe that I shall not be very diligent in collecting materials for it.

Vienna, May 2, 1774.

L E T.

L E T T E R VIII.

TO THE SAME.

As you had prepared me, my dear friend, for the arrival of the most worthy Count *Scarnafgi*, at this court, it is my duty to give you an account of his reception. This minister, in the few days which he has resided at Vienna, has already had the power of acquiring the approbation and esteem of the whole court, the ministry, and the nobles. I was early in paying my respects to him; he has repeatedly honoured me with visits, and we have already passed some evenings together, under my roof, in a small society to which I am accustomed. So that I have had the advantage of long conversations with him, and found him cultivated, obliging, full of various and uncommon information, and of a gay and graceful commerce, in which he has the faculty of pleasing, without the least tincture of diplomatic mystery or dignity hence, I venture, by virtue of my poetical privilege, to predict, that he will fulfil his commission with applause.

Hitherto

Hitherto he has lodged at a villa in the environs of Vienna; but he has taken a magnificent house in the city, where I shall make my court, when age and infirmities will allow me. He has frequently spoken of you with regard; and I can perceive, clearly, that he remembers you with affection. But let this suffice for the present, as it is all that my tumultuous hypochondriacs will allow me to write.

Vienna, August 18, 1774.

L E T T E R IX.

TO THE SAME.

You may trace and ascertain, my dear Sig. Filipponi, an almost immemorable and uninterrupted possession of my tender friendship, and are enabled to figure to yourself what consolation I must receive from the assurances of your affection, and the emotions which your last most cordial letter must have occasioned in my mind; I shall therefore not attempt to describe them, nor solicit the continuance of your kindness, as neither of us has it in his power now to change his system.

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M

You

You are now in the midst of the festivity of royal nuptials; and we have no reason to envy you, as we are likewise enjoying the presence of his most serene highness the Archduke Ferdinand, and the charming Archduchess his consort, the Princess d'Este, who has endeared herself to all the inhabitants of this country, from the court to the cabin. The magnificent and numerous demonstrations of joy, with which our court honours and adorns the presence of these great and beloved guests, are truly imperial; but you will, however, far surpass us in the strife of felicitation, as You will preserve your acquisitions, and We are not far off the painful moment of being bereaved of ours.

Adieu, my dear friend. Preserve your health, and continue to believe me invariably yours.

Vienna, October 12, 1775.

This is the last letter that seems to have been preserved, between these two old friends; though Sig. Filipponi lived, and seems to have continued the correspondence, till the year 1779. The following letter of condolence to his son, is a melancholy record of

of Metastasio's affliction, on the decease of a person for whom he seems to have had so cordial an attachment.

LETTER X.

TO SIG. LUIGI FILIPPONI,
*Auditor of the Royal Chamber of Accounts to
the King of Sardinia.*

THE melancholy news of the decease of your worthy father, my old and most cordial friend; Signor Tommaso Filippini, did not arrive without an ill-boding precursor. The unusual long parentheses which he begun to make in our correspondence, had already, for some time, occasioned black suspicions, concerning which I was afraid to enquire, lest they should be verified. From my own great and just affliction, I can comprehend what yours must be, wounded at once, in the two most sensible parts of the heart. But if I am not entitled to the same degree of pity as is due to you, disdain not, at least, to allow me to be no unworthy companion in your sorrow, and in that affection which we have both had in common. Forgive involuntary

brevity, and believe me to be with the most sincere and respectful esteem, &c.

Vienna, March 17, 1779.

The following letters of this period, will shew how dexterously Metastasio eluded gratifying the vanity of authors, who sent him their works, in hopes of obtaining from his candour and politeness, some token of approbation, as a *certiorari*, in passing them through the world.

L E T T E R X I.

TO COUNT DANIEL FLORIO.

With whom Metastasio, (says the editor of his Letters) was in close friendship and correspondence.

IT is unnecessary for me to inform you, Sir, of my internal and candid opinion concerning the admirable Pindaric ode, which, with affectionate partiality, you have been pleased to communicate to me. It neither is, nor can be, different from that which the productions of your cultivated and admirable genius have always exacted from me;

me ; and which, to do honour to my own judgment, I am never tired of repeating at all times and in all places. To second, by my obedience, your excessive modesty, in a most attentive re-perusal of this most neat and finished composition, I have sought, with almost malignant sollicitude, for some little imperfection, which I might, with the least appearance of reason, point out ; but have not succeeded in finding one ; on the contrary, in these researches, I am more and more convinced, that your poetic vigour is encreased, instead of diminished, by years ; and am confirmed in my former opinion, that whoever would be acquainted with the true enchanting language spoken in Helicon by Apollo and the Muses, should read your verses. These indisputable truths I am proud to know, and anxious to publish : hence you may easily imagine what pleasure it would afford me to seize the opportunity which you would give me of prefacing your incomparable poem, when printed, with a letter ; but, for my great misfortune, I am totally unable to avail myself of this permission. And here I shall relate to you the insuperable obstacle. Many years ago, it was

the custom of a swarm of very obscure insects of our Italian Parnassus, imitating each other, to send me their works in manuscript; and afterwards print them, prefixing, without my permission, the letter, which in mere civility, I had written, in returning the MS. I did not fail to resent this; but my letter only produced a formal request, that my opinion (or rather eulogy) might be printed with their works. I reflected, that if I had only obliged those who deserved it, the rest would have been in a fury; and if I had indiscriminately complied with every request, I must have appeared either like the ambling nag of Silenus, or a most impudent and barefaced flatterer. Hence, I found it the safest way, to excuse myself, modestly, to all. This law, which I necessarily imposed on myself, is now become inviolable, from the just fear of offending those to whom I owe respect, and with whose requests, for the reasons just assigned, I was unable to comply. Pity me therefore, my dear Count, for my not being able to avail myself of so favourable an opportunity of doing honour to my judgment; and be not offended, if the *genus irritabile vatum* which imposed silence

on

on Horace, should terrify me. I thank you however, for the partiality which suggested the idea.

Vienna, April 15, 1775.

L E T T E R XII.

TO THE SAME.

AFTER a prolix reply to your last favour, comes another, with a magnificent Sonnet to my honour and glory. And what excess of poetic furor could have stimulated my dear Count, after more than forty years of affectionate friendship, to set about leading into the temptations of vanity, a poor follower of Apollo, who has already laid down the laurel and worn out lyre, and offer to him that precious incense which alone belongs to the luminous sons of fortune? God forgive you! If I had not, for the reason assigned in my preceding letter, been deprived of the power of calling the muses to my assistance, and was not busily occupied in executing the orders of my sovereigns, I should perhaps have tried to revenge myself, by another Sonnet; but I am very glad of this legitimate excuse, which screens me

from the disadvantage of a parallel, particularly with these short arms, which I am unused to wield, &c.

L E T T E R XIII.

TO THE SAME.

My poor *Nugæ canoræ* are unworthy of a place among the choice and learned volumes which you are collecting. However, if your fond partiality should obstinately determine on elevating them to so high a rank, wait at least till they are adorned with their nuptial drefs, which our intrepid editor is at present preparing for them at Paris; and who, if he fulfils his promise, will embellish them with eleven copperplates, exquisitely engraved, of which he has already sent me some proofs. This will be the neatest edition which has hitherto appeared, and will, in some degree, be an excuse for its admission into your library, as the excellence of the frame may make some amends for the mediocrity of the picture.

Vienna, April 30, 1777.

The following lettter to a young author of some rank, in society at least, if not among

among poets, seems worth insertion, not only for the elegance and politeness of our author's compliments, but for the judgment and good taste with which he gives him his advice.

L E T T E R X I V ,

TO HIS EXCELLENCY DON CLEMENTE
FILOMARINO.

A YOUNG gentleman in the first flower of adolescence, to have mounted already so high in Parnassus, is a phenomenon, no less rare, than important. The valuable specimens which you have sent me, are sufficient to manifest the uncommon fertility of your genius, the wonderful perseverance of your application, the vigour with which you invent and think, and, above all, your natural propensity to a noble clearness and perspicuity, which has not yet been seduced and contaminated by that obscure style which has strangely reigned, for some years, in many parts of Italy; where, despising the favour of the people, that is, of the most certain guarantees of immortality, and affecting profundity of wisdom and science, writers are lost in the dark clouds of the confused oracles of

Delphos: their style has not escaped the masterly whip of our great Venosinian bard, in his *Ars Poetica*.

*Et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia præceps :
Utiliumque sagax rerum, & divina futuri
Sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis.*

Thus poetry precipitately flow'd,
And with unwonted elocution glow'd;
Pour'd forth prophetic truths in awful strain,
Dark as the language of the Delphic fane.

FRANCIS.

Confide, therefore, in your natural good sense; remember always, that the first duty of a writer, is to make himself intelligible; that the most difficult art of being clear, without sinking into meanness, is much more generally tasted, than the begging dignity from darkness; and I'll engage all my little credit, as an old Deacon of Apollo, to secure to you a most distinguished place among the celebrated names of the elect Italian poetical band.

The partial expressions with which you honour me, are extremely flattering; and I shall not enter upon demonstrating their excess, lest I should bring on myself new temptations of vanity from the same quarter.

Vienna April 6, 1775.

The

The subsequent letter to the ingenious and eloquent Ex-Jesuit, EXIMENO, will probably gratify the lovers of musical history. This bold writer on Music, published at Rome, in 1774, a treatise in quarto, *On the Origin and Rules of Music, with the History of its progress, declension, and renovation**. In the preface to this treatise, the author modestly confesses, that by a combination of circumstances too long to relate, he *chanced* “four years ago, to give a glance at music.” And during that short period, he not only made himself master of the art, but discovered great defects, both in its practice and theory. He proposes in his dissertation, nothing less than a total *disorganization* of the present system of counterpoint, which if adopted, would probably contribute about as much to the melioration of music, as the revolution in the government of France has contributed to the happiness of its inhabitants. He shews no mercy to the ancient masters of harmony, and as little to the moderns, who adhere to the old *regime*. This author, a scholar, mathematician, and man of taste

* *Dell' origine e delle regole della musica, colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione.* Opera di D. ANTONIO EXIMENO.

and

and learning in general literature, writes with fire and eloquence, on subjects within his competence ; but after trying to *pull down* all the ancient temples to Apollo, the buildings he proposes to erect in their stead, were so defective in design and execution, that, they crumbled to pieces before they were finished ; nor do his plans seem to have been adopted by any man of genius or science, in order to propagate his doctrines.

In 1775, this musical Reformer attacked *Padre Martini*, the most learned Contrapuntist of the present century, in a work entitled, *Doubts concerning his Essay on the fundamental Practice of Counterpoint* *. And if he had confined his censures to the too great partiality and attachment of this good father, to the ancient method of building all ecclesiastical harmony upon *Canto fermo*, he would probably have formed a powerful sect ; but, extending his hostilities to the works of all the fathers of harmony, and to the ancient fundamental principles of the art, his opinions seem to have been no more

* *Dubbio di D. ANTONIO EXIMENO sopra il saggio fondamentale pratico di contrappunto del reverendissimo Padre Maestro GIAMBATTISTA MARTINI. In Roma, l'anno del Giubileo, MDCCCLXXV. 4to.*

respected at Rome, or in any part of Italy, on the subject of music, than those of Luther or Calvin, concerning religion.

It not only appears from the following letter, but from other letters of Metastasio, that Signor *Eximeno* had projected a scheme for printing this poet's operas, with the original music in score, which had been set to them by the great masters of Italy, when they were first performed. To have assisted him in the execution of this plan, and others which he had in meditation, would have occupied too much of the Imperial Laureat's leisure at his late time of life; nor does it seem likely, that at an earlier period, he would have involved himself in labours of such a kind, with a man so decisive, and of such difficult commerce, as D. *Eximeno*.

L E T T E R X V.

TO SIGNOR D. ANTONIO EXIMENO.

INDOLENCE (which at my time of life, is but too legitimate an excuse) has not been the only cause of my tardiness in answering your judicious, learned, and affectionate letter of last June: a letter which alone is sufficient

ficient to convince me of the vast extent of your talents, the value of the ample treasure with which your amazing indefatigable application has enriched your mind, the *sapience* of Horace, that is, the correct judgment which reigns in all you think and write, a faculty which has at all times been uncommon, even among the greatest writers, and above all, the debt of gratitude for the exact correspondence of ideas which loads me with such visibly excessive, or rather affectionate partiality, as that with which you honour me and my writings: But a wish (not a command) of my august Patroness, that I would write some verses upon her delightful Imperial residence at *Schonbrunn*, has obliged me to run unexpectedly to Parnassus, and bring thence in haste, a tribute of the few flowers that I have been able to gather in the humble bourns, beyond which I am forbidden to ascend. It certainly was not the merit of my homage, but my prompt obedience which procured in writing, in speech, and in Imperial munificence, such marks of favour from my generous sovereign, and so superior to my hopes, that I cannot yet recover from my confusion: and these, with the addition of attending the press in printing

ing this late fruit of my exhausted soil, have, till now, entirely absorbed all my activity, which has ever been circumscribed, but at present becomes more and more limited than ever.

After this justification, let me, in the first place, thank you for the favour which you have done me in describing the darkness in which you were involved, in seeking for the true and solid principles of music: since the example of such enquirers as you, diminishes my own mortification in similar attempts, which I soon abandoned, in despair.

The immense, and extremely expensive, enterprize, which you have in meditation, of publishing a new edition of my dramas, with their most favourite music, and with such inevitably copious observations as you will be obliged to give in defence of your opinions, oppresses my imagination, which represents to me the enormous fatigue, the excessive expence, the little hope of your indemnification by the number of purchasers, and still more, with the painful reflection, that I shall be utterly incapable of assisting you, as an able amanuensis in this laborious undertaking, the diminution of my physical
force

force not permitting me to pay with punctuality, or even with short answers, my debts to all those who honour me with their letters.

My works, however, would be in want of but too much correction; but how could I plunge into such a sea of trouble? I have already tired the public with too many of my gingling trifles; and, besides the vigour and patience which would be wanting to go over them again, I should have to combat my vicious temperament, which inclines me always to doubt of myself, and not merely from excess of modesty, but from insatiable self love, which frequently makes me reject what is good, to run after what is perfect; by which means I run the risk of choosing at last something still worse than the first.

Add to all this, that the appearing in print has always impressed and still impresses me with such respect, that without absolute necessity, I should never have had the courage to risk its effects. I shall here give you a proof of this diffidence. Many years ago, I undertook and completed an extract from the Poetics of Aristotle, in which, chapter by chapter, I confessed what I was able to understand, and what remained still obscure to me,

me, in spite of the diligence and sagacity of the most illustrious commentators ; I tried to acquire a more clear idea of the nature of *Poetry, Imitation, and Probability*. By examining the Greek and Roman dramas, I have demonstrated the false foundation of some of the rules laid down by modern critics ; and have pointed out the authority which the text gave me, of laying down certain axioms, which the practice of more than fifty years has shewn to be erroneous. Even before I had made this extract, I had translated into blank verse an exact version of Horace's Art of Poetry, with the most scrupulous fidelity, illustrated with notes, that were neither common nor pedantic, but necessary ; and yet these two labours, terminated long since, notwithstanding the solicitations of my friends, sleep quietly in my port-folio ; and there they will remain undisturbed : as I cannot possibly muster courage sufficient to publish them. With this disposition of mind, you may easily imagine, Sir, what agitation your affectionate and partial proposition of employing your pen in writing my life must have occasioned. Drive from your thoughts, I entreat you, my dear D. Antonio, such wicked temptations, if you would not ex-

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cessively afflict me by your too great desire of doing me honour. It is a perilous generosity to be prodigal of incense so sweet to such as me: it would excite nothing but envy, disputes, and malignity, among partizans; but still if by means of your enchanting eloquence, it were to succeed to your wishes, in obliging the whole world to be of your opinion, and you should lift me up to the skies, I must confess (call it weakness or reason, as you please) I do not feel myself inclined to be a living spectator of my Apotheosis. With the same sincerity as I confess my infirmity, permit me to acknowledge my infinite gratitude and true sense of your partiality towards me, which I regard as a most valuable acquisition. But how would it be possible for Me to inform you of the Best Music that has been set to my operas, having scarcely heard of any but what has been performed in the theatre of the Imperial Court? and of this, the chief part has been set by the celebrated *Caldara*, an eminent contrapuntist, but extremely deficient in expression, and pleasing melody.

The most painful effect of my inability, would be the diminution of your esteem: but you are too just to regard as crimes mere involuntary

involuntary defects : with this hope I shall therefore entreat you to believe me to be, with the highest regard, &c.

P. S. I am impatient to free my conscience from the weight of a great number of correspondents, who have long been unavoidably neglected, for the reasons specified in the former part of my letter, in order to acquire leisure sufficient to enjoy the delight and profit which I expect from the perusal of the books which you have sent me : but in the mean time, let me gratefully thank you for the precious and obliging gifts.

Vienna, August 22, 1776.

In this dexterous manner did Metaftasio extricate himself from the wild and unreasonable project proposed to him by *D. Ant. Eximeno*, and it should seem, from giving an opinion of his Treatise, and attack of *P. Martini* ; for we hear no more of either.

The Bard had another Roman correspondent on his hands about this time, who wished to enlist him in a service for which he seems at all times to have had an invincible repugnance. His fear of giving offence, and love of tranquillity, made him decline polemics

and comparative criticism, not only with respect to the works of living authors, but even of those who had been dead more than 2000 years. But let him speak for himself.

L E T T E R XVI.

TO THE ABATE * * *, AT ROME.

THE affectionate partiality with which I am honoured, by a person of your uncommon merit, would oblige me, in return for such goodness, to be more punctual in my answers, and more diffuse in my expressions of gratitude, did not the precarious state of my health, and the ravages of time, which conspire day by day to diminish my vigour and activity, deprive me of the pleasure of corresponding with those whom I most love and esteem, and who have deigned to think me worthy of their regard. From this ingenuous confession, you may easily comprehend whether I can be in a state capable of executing your commands, in giving my sentiments on the Works of *Sophocles* and *Euripides*: an enterprise very unfit for me to undertake, who am by nature averse, even
to

to a vice, to the drawing parallels, which are generally odious, and subject to the insults of critics and disputants. I shall therefore confine myself to the telling you, laconically, that I regard these two illustrious Greek poets, as two artists equally excellent: that *Sophocles* is skilfully majestic; *Euripides* more simple and tender: that the first is full of luminous ideas, and the second of affections more true, and natural; and that both equally astonish, by the conduct of the principal action, by the exact delineation of characters, and by that most difficult power of modelling, and chiseling from the life, the passions of the human heart. But I communicate my opinion to you in mere confidence; nor will you think it merits publication, if you have any regard for my credit; therefore, begging you to spare my blushes, I remain, &c,

Vienna, June 16, 1775

The following letter to the same anonymous Abate, who had written a dissertation on *Modern Music*, a music which Metastasio seems to have censured with great severity,

will disclose to the reader the poet's ideas on the same subject.

LETTER XVII.

TO THE ABATE * * *, AT ROME.

IF I was not occupied and fatigued with my present employment, and rapidly declining and tottering under the weight of years, I should not neglect a correspondence so valuable as yours, from which I am certain of deriving such great advantages; being well convinced by your obliging letters, with what rich and rare merchandize your storehouse is furnished. I congratulate you on the acquisition of such inestimable treasures, and wonder how it has been possible for you to unite with the noisy occupations of the Forum the elegant amusements of Helicon; and that, in spite of Themis, you are able to enjoy such delightful pastime with the muses.

I have, at length, had the pleasure of reading your dissertation on *Modern Music*, and assure you that you have greatly surpassed my expectations. But above all, I have been surprised at the arrangement of the materials,

the

the neatness and elegance of the style, the ingenious texture of the arguments, and in short, at the artful and masterly manner in which you have thrown lights on the most remote and dark antiquity. To these incomparable excellencies of profound learning, must also be added, your initiation into the mysteries of harmony, which seems very considerable, and gives great force, lustre, and weight to your opinions. With respect to the intrinsic excellence of Modern Music, I am of your opinion; and agree with you, that its effects are few and feeble, compared with those which Plato ascribes to the ancient. In fact, our music * enervates the mind, being so extremely artificial and refined, that it is impossible to trace through it, either probability or natural expression; and yet, from insuperable habit, it is become the reigning model of almost all the music of every nation; as men judge more by their ears than by reason †. By divisions and artful modulations of voice, and by the union of so great a number of different instruments, the sense

* The Italian.

† Music is more the object of sense than intellect; its use is to please the ear, not to improve the understanding. It has been said, that music can awaken and excite sensations, but cannot reason.

is flattered and tickled to such a degree, that it remains enfeebled, and almost bewitched, by those long and rapid trills, which, though they resemble so much the warbling of birds, please us much less, because less natural. The pleasure of conversing with you, drags me on insensibly; and pleased with this transport, I flatter myself with the hopes of your affectionate forgiveness.

Vienna, September 8, 1776.

Metastasio, late in life, readily joined in the almost general complaint against rapid and difficult execution in music; and yet, at other periods, he was partial to a Farinelli and a Gabrielli, whose chief excellence was *execution*. The extraordinary talents, perhaps, of these singers greatly increased the celebrity of his dramas; but when that was firmly established, it was natural for him to wish to simplify music, and render its powers inferior to those of poetry. Indeed there never was perhaps a lyric poet who did not *listen* with an *evil ear* to the rapturous applause given to a singer in performing an air, of which, according to the late Mr. Stillingfleet,

fleet, nobody would think of reading the words, but the author *.

We shall now return to Farinelli, in the correspondence with whom there is a *hiatus valde deflendus*, from 1769 to 1776, which has not been accounted for by the editor of his letters. In 1770, when I saw Farinelli at Bologna, and frequently mentioned Metastasio in our conversation, he spoke of him as his beloved *Gemello*, shewed me his picture, and, in 1772, Metastasio spoke of Farinelli with reciprocal kindness: so that there seems to have been no breach of friendship, coolness, or diminution of affection, on either side, during the chasm in Metastasio's printed correspondence; and the accident which occasioned it remains yet to be discovered.

L E T T E R XVIII.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

MY poor abortion of an ode to *Schonbrunn*, is really born under the favourable

* Principles and power of music.

influence

influence of all the planets *. The approbation which it meets with, to the wonder and confusion of the author himself, is certainly not merited by its intrinsic worth. That it should appear marvellous to my dear Gemello, long blinded and seduced by his old tender affection, now transformed into nature, is a phenomenon not difficult to explain; but I am at a loss to discover how he has been able to communicate his partialities to their severe and enlightened eminencies, to such a degree as to incline them to honour me with their benevolence and approbation. It now becomes your task to endeavour to preserve the advantages which you have procured me, by representing to them, with your enchanting voice, my grateful, humble, and respectful sentiments to the Cardinals *Borromeo* and *Buoncompagni*; assuring the first, that I have always present in my mind his venerated person, with all the train of great qualities by which it is distinguished; and affirm to the second, that notwithstanding the vicissitudes which occasioned my

* This ode, of which the author speaks in several letters to different persons, did not appear in any of the printed copies of his works which I have seen, during his life. It consists of twenty-six stanzas, six lines in each.

quitting

quitting my country before he had become a citizen of the world, I am not ignorant how much he has honoured it, and how much his laudable actions, and amiable manners have encreased the lustre and splendour to which he was born.

It is some consolation to me, that your familiar complaints have had the discretion to subside, for a little while ; mine are constant ; but I dare not complain : at my age, I have no right to complain : murmuring would but irritate my infirmities, and render existence more painful. We have here, as well as you at Bologna, all the amusements of the Carnival : operas, plays, Italian and German, public and private balls, festivity, banquets, and vigils, without end ; but all these cannot produce, in this tranquil nation, that epidemic hilarity, which in our gay climate is transfused into all characters, not only those that seek it not, but forcing itself even upon those who wish to avoid it. And at present, such as I are well off if they can defend themselves from the horrible third winter, which, like the liver of Prometheus, re-produces itself : and it is certain, that without the valid patronage of our beneficent stoves, we should at present be in the state
of

of those preservations which you have certainly heard of, in the mountains of *La Mancha*, or the *Sierra Morena*, I forget which, that, without falting, become incorruptible when buried under a deep snow. But you have set me a scribbling, though the nerves of my head protest against it. Adieu, dear Gemello. I do not put you in mind of loving me, as, after so many proofs, it would be a species of ingratitude to imagine there was any occasion for it: but by taking care of your health, you will give the best proof of it, to your most constant friend.

Vienna, February 9, 1776.

L E T T E R XIX.

TO THE SAME.

IT is not to present you with the insipid fruit of my exhausted soil; but to fulfil the inviolable right of our twinship, that I send you a copy of my ode to *Schonbrunn*, which is just come from the press, in order that you may have the distinction of being first punished, in some way or other, for the want of merit, which but too easily will be found in my production. I did not accompany my
poor

poor present with a letter, because I must have done the same to other persons to whom I owe respect and gratitude; and the time it would have required, would have robbed me of the merit of solicitude. The more than excessive clemency, which my most august sovereign has publicly expressed, in speaking, writing, and acts of generous munificence, has filled me with such joy and confusion, that I was a long time incapable of thinking of it with any degree of composure. Be not offended therefore, my dear Gemello, with my innocent silence; you ought, indeed, the more readily to forgive me, as the same thing would have happened to your own heart, in similar circumstances.

I honestly disbursed to our friend *Poggi*, the affectionate compliments which you remitted, and he is to reimburse you, on account, when he shall again see the as's tower*. In the mean time, do you pay on my account two hundred kind remembrances, accompanied with innumerable protestations of esteem and affection, to my

* *La Torre degli Asinelli*. A celebrated tower at Bologna, three hundred and sixty feet high. This city, at a distance, has been compared to a ship, of which the tower *degli Asinelli* seems the mast.

dear

dear and worthy Abate *Taruffi*, who is ever present to my thoughts; wishing him the indemnifications of fortune, who, at present, makes a shameless parade of her hostilities to merit. My health is not what I wish it; but it is better than I have a right to expect: so that I dare not complain. Preserve your own carefully, and sail through the alternate good and bad vicissitudes of life, guided by that sound philosophy with which nature has liberally furnished you, and continue to be always as much mine as I am yours.

Vienna, September 30, 1776.

L E T T E R XX.

TO THE SAME.

HERE comes another most cordial letter from my beloved Gemello, who, through excess of affection, repeats the approbation which he had profusely given in a former letter, to my few verses on the delights of *Schonbrunn*; verses which have no other merit than what is reflected on them, from the general favour and veneration which the public bestows on every thing that concerns my admirable Sovereign; and this repetition affords

affords me infinite comfort, not merited by the sound of my discordant lyre, but as an indisputable testimony of your affection, of which, though I am already convinced by a thousand proofs, new confirmations are always received with delight. The thought of honouring my dear Gemello with a visit, is worthy of the generous heart of her Royal Highness the Dutchess of Parma, the illustrious protectress of the fine arts; who is not only an exquisite judge of the abilities of artists, but appreciates their probity, candour, and spotless morals; rare merchandize, and not always sufficiently valued. I can never forget her performing the part of Apollo, by which, with her enchanting voice and angelic figure, she rendered one of my feeble dramatic compositions, written by order of my most august Patroness, admirable and sublime, and lifted me up to a degree of happiness, of which I shall ever be proud.

The benign graciousness with which I have been remembered by her Royal Highness, at once comforts and confounds me, in the generous manner with which she has deigned to signify it repeatedly, to the Venetian Ambassador, Count *Durazzo*, and to my dear Gemello: and from the situation of your
own

own heart on similar unexpected occasions, you may perfectly imagine what must be the emotions of mine.

Adieu, my dear Gemello, I should write a longer letter, if my constant hypochondriac affections, rendered more troublesome and perverse by the cold, would let me; but in spite of all my defects and infirmities, continue to love me.

Vienna, November 13, 1776.

The next letter to Farinelli, dated March 13, 1777, contains little more than thanks for a present of various things sent in a chest, which was not yet arrived; and elegant compliments and grateful effusions to Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, for his partiality towards him, and expressions of gratitude to a Bolognese physician, who had enriched his dispensary with a prescription in pure love of poetry. He finishes this letter in the following manner: "I shall not speak to you of my incorruptible complaints, which I pretend not to destroy, and shall forgive all the plague they occasion, provided they do not surpass my patience."

The

The *stottiglia*, as he calls the chest, being arrived, he writes as follows :

L E T T E R X X I.

TO FARINELLI.

THE day before yesterday, the 20th inst. I was informed of the arrival at the custom house, of the chest, which you had sent me ; and yesterday morning, I received, and had it opened in my presence, and found it full of most powerful temptations of every kind. The first thing I thought of, was to seek and taste the *finnel**, chosen by you as a treat for my favourite guests. I believe this is the most delicate *finnel* that ever came out of the exquisite shop of Parthenope. Oh my poor temperance ! thou art in the most imminent danger. And how can such assaults be resisted ? These famous myrtles too ! These little boxes composed and ornamented

* *Mostacciolo*, is a cake made at Naples, of flour, sugar, eggs, and sweet wine, very different from a Shrewsbury *finnel*, which is a rich plum-cake inclosed in an impenetrable case, or crust made of flour and water, and coloured with saffron, which preserves it from injury and decay in the longest voyages to the most remote parts of the globe.

for the table of Jove ! Those excellent iced-quinces, with which the maiden care of the genteel inhabitants of the monastery of Saint Lorenzo, disdains not to flatter the palates of others ; and that inundation of odours, piquant and exquisite *liqueurs*, with which you scruple not to raise a tumult in the too sensible nerves of your poor Gemello's head ! But the most violent seduction of all, and that which occasions the greatest agitation in my mind, is reflecting upon the kind manner in which you must have been for some time employed in the service of your Gemello, while chusing, ordering, and collecting together, such a combination of various, exquisite, and precious merchandise. Accept my most hearty and affectionate thanks : but that I may not abuse your kindness to the injury of my health, and that these testimonies of your love, may be of long duration, they shall be enjoyed with the most prudent parsimony.

I received some weeks ago, an obliging letter from Signora *Giacinta Betti Onofrio* : a lady who voluntarily, a few years ago, began to honour me with her letters, by which alone she is known to me. I answered them ; and as she saluted me in your
name,

name, I charged her with my kindest compliments to you in return ; pray tell me, at your convenience, whether she executed my commission. Adieu, my dearest Charles. My head rebels, and has been for some weeks more troublesome than usual : but in spite of it, I have been, am at present, and ever shall be, while I exist, yours.

Vienna, March 22d, 1777.

L E T T E R XXII.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR most kind answer of the 8th inst. permits me not, my dear Gemello, to remain in that silence which my renewed hypochondriac complaints but too justly authorize ; as, contrary to expectation, the return of winter has driven us back again to the protection of our stoves, which we had abandoned. The perusal of your letter has been more efficacious in calming my gloomy humours, than all the antidotes of philosophy, which promise so much, and perform so little. I have discovered how precious to me, are the choice and exquisite dainties with which you have enriched me, by that avaricious

ricious repugnance which I felt in distributing any part of them, even to persons to whom I owe the most sincere gratitude : but the pain which the sacrifice occasioned, has been recompensed by the great pleasure which the approbation of my friends has occasioned, and by the renewal of the just praises bestowed on the qualities of my dear Gemello, of which, to my great delight, I find the whole world well informed.

I am confused, and proud of the partial benignity with which the most venerated Cardinal *Buoncompagni* regards me. And as you are juridically authorised to procure me its continuance, with the opportune and repeated protestations of my grateful, dutiful, and profound respect, I here solemnly declare you, in this most important negotiation, my procurator, or rather, my ALTER EGO. Adieu, dearest Gemello, preserve yourself carefully, if you would contribute to the preservation of your, &c.

Vienna, April 21, 1777.

LET-

L E T T E R XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

IF you, my dear Gemello, find yourself involved in the difficulties of the *Plagal tones*, I am not among the *Authentic* *. The last winter assailed me with rheumatism, tension of nerves, implacable hypochondria, and other gentilities: from which the present benign season promises to deliver me, though with less promptitude than I should wish, But according to the ancient proverb, we should suffer under the auspices of constant resignation; *hoping for good, and tolerating evil*,——

I thank you for the important personage which you made me represent in the confistory held by the three worthy Cardinals in your house: and when, and where, either in speech or writing, it is in your power, I beg you will not neglect presenting to them my grateful and profound respects.

An intrepid editor at Paris, has undertaken a magnificent and expensive edition of all my

* Alluding to the ecclesiastical tones of *Canto fermo*, an account of which, see *History of Music*, vol. II. p. 13.

works ; and in informing me of his design, has transmitted to me proofs of eleven of the plates, already excellently engraved : and if the rest correspond with these, the cornice will be much more rich and elegant than the building. I shall in due time inform you of the further progress of this enterprize.

Notwithstanding my having called for assistance in devouring the dainties with which your seducing *Flottiglia* has enriched my store-room, I have not yet come to the bottom of my stores : so that I still continue, and shall, the Lord knows how much longer, to masticate your favours, and mentally to embrace the amiable donor. Adieu, incomparable Gemello.

Vienna, June 21, 1777.

L E T T E R XXIV.

TO THE SAME.

HAVING read with the highest satisfaction, some weeks ago, in letters from Rome, that his Eminence Cardinal *Buoncompagni* was preparing to return to Bologna, I rejoiced extremely at the thoughts of your happiness, and wished instantly to congratulate you
upon

upon it; but my abominable hypochondriac, or rather hysterical affections, were in such a tumult, that I durst not touch the pen. At present, as you have confirmed this pleasing news in your letter of the 25th of July, which is but just received, I fly with my whole mind to Bologna, to embrace and felicitate you, and to participate of your unexpected happiness, in spite of the obstinate persecutions of my various maladies. Do you be my eloquent delegate with this most worthy Cardinal, and contrive to convince him of my veneration, gratitude, and respect.

What can I say to the unsolicited generous partiality of that most worthy Marchioness *Pepoli Spada*, in favour of my poor silly rhymes? The picture which you have drawn of her, with the enumeration of her rare qualities and accomplishments, render me proud of the acquisition of such a protectress, and I should be much more so if I did not believe her deluded by your *twinky* seduction. I envy extremely the fate of that volume of my writings, which the *Abate Pignatelli* has exalted to the dignity of his companion: and am only sorry that he will not be better rewarded for the trouble of taking it with him. Express to both my gratitude; you, who are not incommoded

with my confusion, may do it much better than me.

I expect soon to receive the Paris editor's proposals; and shall inform you, the instant they arrive, of the plan and conditions of this vast enterprize. He wrote me word some time ago, that he should associate partners, and take in subscriptions; not for advancing money, but to ascertain the number of copies which he may venture to work off. Nothing is to be disbursed till the work comes out, which will be delivered by a volume or two at a time.

Speak not to me, my dear Gemello, of another *stottiglia*: I cannot get to the end of the first; think therefore whether I can allow you to send a second. Besides, more virtue than I possess, is necessary to prevent intemperance in the use of your kindness: and you, my dear Gemello, should be more solicitous for my health, than sensual pleasure.

Adieu, dear Gemello: preserve in yourself a rare model of amiable, honest, generous, and prudent men, in the midst of such scarcity; be assured that I perfectly know you, and therefore can never cease to be truly yours.

Vienna, August 12, 1777.

L E T.

. L E T T E R . XXV.

TO THE SAME.

THE steady and neat writing of your last dear letter of the 15th instant, the chearful humour which reigns in it, and the gay symposiacs which you describe, if they do not entirely make me amends, my dear Gemello, for my affliction at the news of the cruel and violent hurricane which your health has lately suffered; I at least hope that this unexpected attack which you so valiantly repelled, was inferior to your remaining vigour: and that it has made no impressions on your machine, which can disturb its equilibrium. I congratulate you on this circumstance, though I do not wish you, however, to have frequent occasions for such congratulation.

You shall be obeyed in due time, with respect to the copies which you wish of the new Paris edition; but the proposals not being yet arrived, I am unable to answer your queries.

I am truly sensible of the zeal which his Eminence Cardinal Buoncompagni expresses
for

for corrections in the Paris edition ; but it is difficult to promise them all, as the editions whence this will be printed, are so numerous. I certainly shall not fail to recommend the measures he wishes to have pursued : and in the mean time, plume myself in having my poor labours honoured with the attention of so great a Patron. Present to him, I entreat you, my gratitude and veneration. Assure the most obliging Marchioness *Spada*, and the Abate *Pignatelli*, of my gratitude, and that they shall be informed of the method of becoming subscribers to the new edition, as well as of the time for paying their money, and receiving their books, as soon as I shall know it myself ; but of which, at present, I am wholly ignorant.

Our honoured friend, Signor *Poggi*, has been very long in paying you the fraternal embraces which I consigned to his care ; but the pleasure which you express in receiving them, will not allow me to complain of this delay.

Adieu, dear Gemello : take care of yourself for your own sake, as well as mine, for the reasons given warm from my heart in my last letter ; and which you, from gratitude and innate goodness, repay me with
interest.

interest. I am pleased with your panegy-
 rical expressions, as proceeding from that
 affectionate short-sightedness, which makes
 you mine, and me yours.

Vienna, September 29, 1777.

LETTER XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

THE hilarity of your dear letter, of the
 20th of October, which, I know not for
 what reason, only arrived yesterday, has
 given me more than usual pleasure. If this
 serenity is a physical consequence of the
 good state of your health, I congratulate you
 on the solidity of your little frame ; and if it
 is the fruit of your philosophical meditation,
 I admire the vigour of your mind. My
 thoughts have not been inactive concerning
 you, during my silence : I have always been
 thinking of my Gemello, even during an
 indiscreet attack of erysipelas in my left foot,
 which has confined me to the house four
 entire weeks : and yet I owe it no ill-will,
 as it has left me in a better state than it
 found me. We are here up to the chin in
 frost and snow ; but grown callous, by the
 frequency

frequency of such favours, we pay little regard to them.

Yet the Teutonic winter will certainly be revenged for our present contempt, by some insupportably cold weather; but we flatter ourselves that it will not be of long duration, and in the mean time, are preparing for our defence. I envy your vicinity to the venerated Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, the worthy Marchioness *Spada*, and the most accomplished Abate *Pignatelli*: to all whom I beg of you to present my grateful and sincere respects.

The printer, *Reggiano*, pledges himself for what I cannot possibly give; having repeatedly promised, long since, all my inedited works to the publisher of the Paris edition. He had better wait for the French press, and copy into his edition all that is new in it: but then those pieces will not be inedited. It would be great pity if the whole impression, as you seem to fear, should remain on his hands. The public would be robbed of the numerous instructions concerning the dramatic art, which, in this edition, would ornament my poor poetical follies. Adieu, dear Gemello, forget not to believe me, &c. &c.

P. S.

P. S. Upon a more accurate perusal of your letter, I find it dated the 10th of December, and not October. Therefore, it is but just to exculpate the post.

Vienna, December 30, 1777.

LETTER XXVII.

TO THE SAME.

AFTER a most beautiful Spring, during the first thirteen days of the present month, that had rendered this country warm and smiling; the treacherous winter is returned, and has mortified the fields and plants which had put on their green and flowery drefs: so that your dear letter found me again muffled up in the furs and flannels which I had but just laid aside, and extremely scandalized at the discourtesy of this climate. Since yesterday, it has seemed inclined to behave better; but I shall not trust to it, and shall adhere to the sage Spanish proverb: *Hasta el quaranta de Mayo no te quites el sayo**.

You are all occupied with the representation of Alcæste; and we are equally employed

* Till the fortieth of May
Fling thy cloak not away.

by

by the sacred eloquence of father *Francesco Maria* of Bologna; who, in the Italian national church here, has not only collected and edified a noble and most numerous audience, by the sermons and discourses which he has so ably given, but greatly encreased the just reputation and esteem which he had acquired in this city two years ago. His departure hence is fixed for the next month; he is charged with my most affectionate and fraternal remembrances, with all the vivacity which could be given to them, consistent with the serious and respectable character which he sustains.

My health being better, as I have heretofore said, than I have a right to expect, I dare not give way to the temptation, to which I am but too much inclined, of complaining. I must, however, perpetually recommend to you the care of your own health, if you have any value for mine. Neglect not to keep me in the remembrance of the most worthy Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, and in that of the no less worthy and noble house of *Spada*; accept my thanks for the precious lentils which you have sent me, and believe, without ever sacrilegiously doubting of it, that I am yours.

Vienna, April 23, 1778.

L E T T E R XXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

I WISH, my dear Gemello, that our twinship made you resemble me less in the too frequent irregularities of health; but your dear letter of the first of this month, convinces me, that you are no less obliged to be always upon your guard against insidious attacks of your tranquillity. I know that the most specific drug for our maladies, is patience; but to put it in practice requires heroism; and it has ever been my opinion, that the trade of a hero is not long supportable.

The benign remembrance of me by the Arch-dukes at Milan, at once consoles and confounds me: and I entirely participate in the favour which they have manifested to you. It is but just, that he who shares your pains, should partake of your honours. Included in this account, are likewise the visits which you receive from their Eminences, *Buoncampagni*, and *Simoni*: to the first of whom, I beseech you to renew the usual attestations of my veneration, as well as of my respect and gratitude to all the illustrious family

family of *Spada*, and to all others who honour me with their remembrance ; but in particular, to the very worthy father *Francesco Maria* of Bologna ; who, in a most obliging letter, has given me a very exact account of the state of your health, and of my situation in your good heart, as well as of the affectionate and obliging reception with which you have honoured him.

I hope you have already seen and read, the proposals of Molini the printer, at Paris, for publishing a complete and magnificent edition of all my works : I should instantly have transmitted his proposals to you by the post, if I had not seen the names of Messrs. *Taruffi* of Bologna, in the list of commissioners for receiving subscriptions and delivering the books, when ready ; which rendered my original intention useless.

I should lengthen my letter, but it is late, and I have people all around me ; so that with a tender and hasty embrace, I, for the present, take my leave.

Vienna, June 18, 1778.

The subsequent letters of this year to Farinelli, are chiefly on the subject of the

Paris edition of the poet's works, and mutual complaints of infirmities and declining health. In September, he says—"Here, the season, which had already threatened us with the return of winter, is again become serene, temperate, and in every particular pleasant; I hope that your's is likewise changed for the better, and that the indispositions of which you complain, will be all removed. Mine, by dint of habit, have familiarized me to patience; so that I do not complain of them, except some physical shock of the machine torments me more than usual. Employ yourself, my dear Gemello, as much as possible, to divert your attention from those gloomy meditations to which I perceive you inclined, and which, instead of relieving, encrease our sufferings. Your former felicity was not sufficient to make you lose your equilibrium; a proof, that your mind does not want the necessary vigour for facing inconvenience. Adieu. I find that I have already moralized too much. Do not cease to love me, or, at least, to think of me, which did not use to put you out of humour; and I will do the same: consoling myself always with the pleasure

VOL. III. P " I feel,

“ I feel, in supposing that I am possessed of
“ your affection.”

L E T T E R XXVIX.

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI.

It is not from entertaining the least doubt of your affection, on account of the time that has elapsed since your last letter, but to interrupt the prescription of so long a silence, that I vanquish my too reasonable repugnance to writing, which daily encreases with my age; and likewise to give you on paper, a thousand of those embraces that I never cease giving with my heart, which is always the same for you. In the news which has arrived here of the earthquake at Bologna, you have been the first object of my reflections. But not' having found your name in any account which has been received here, I have assured myself, that you and your chattels have been unhurt: and this I am the more inlined to hope, as a letter from his eminence Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, addressed to one of his correspondents in Vienna, considerably diminishes the horrors of the first account, which were
extremely

extremely exaggerated. The same will likewise happen to you concerning the account of our magazine of powder being blown up; which by the force of tragic eloquence in the first relators, announced the destruction of Vienna. Amidst all these events, my health obstinately preserves a good appearance; but, though it deceives others, it is not sufficient to deceive myself, who really feel the insidious progress internally making by the enemy: and, like a theatrical hero, I am never able to impose on myself in the same manner as I do on the spectators.

Vienna, August 19, 1779.

L E T T E R XXX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR most cordial letter of the 12th inst. as usual, full of those affectionate expressions, of which, without ingratitude, I cannot doubt the sincerity; and seasoned with that gay and serene eloquence, which alone can announce the regular equilibrium of our humour, has consoled, rejoiced, and furnished me with arguments to confirm me in the hope, that heaven will long be propitious

to my prayers, in preserving your life for the solace of your friends, and as a model for those who are capable of knowing and imitating you. I, who feel the weight of a pen at our time of life, gratefully receive instances of that affection, which stimulates you from time to time, to comfort me with your letters. *Padre Guardiano* minutely informed me of the delightful day which he passed with you in your garden of the Hesperides; and I consoled myself for not being of the party, by thinking of your own pleasure on this occasion, and wishing you a repetition of that happiness; flattering myself with the hopes of the *Gemello* not being wholly absent, though far distant.

I believe myself entirely indebted to your constant partiality, for being still remembered by the *Spada* family, by Cardinal *Buoncompagni*, the Duke *Riario*, Signor *Pignatelli*, and Signor *Germani Valdivia*: and beg of you to continue the task of helping me to secure such an invaluable blessing, by representing to them the respect and veneration with which I am impressed by their condescension. Present particular thanks to Duke *Riario*, for the pains which he takes in embellishing one of my poor dramatic children
with

with his elegant music: and, in gratitude, I wish him patience to perform the operation.

Cardinal *Migazzi*, Count *Rosenberg*, and the Spanish Ambassador, will have your compliments, whenever I am able to transport myself into their vortex, which is at present too tumultuous for me.

Forget not, I entreat you, to render particular thanks to our good father *Guardiano*, for the lively account which he has given me of the extasy into which he was ravished, at hearing what a valiant defence your voice has made against the injuries of time. I have it still fresh in my memory, and I might say in my ears, what it was when you first ascended the throne of the whole vocal band: so that I am not surpris'd at his surprise.

Vienna, November 23, 1779.

At this late period of the poet's life, he not only preserved his epistolary intercourse, with surviving old friends, but accepted the voluntary offers of new correspondents, who solicited his approbation, advice, or acquaintance. Of the former class, was the Abate *Galfo*, to whom the first letter in the collection, that seems to have been preserved, is

dated 1778, when the Poet was arrived at his eightieth year.

L E T T E R XXXI.

TO THE ABATE DON ANTONIO GALFO.

Six days ago, your most obliging letter, dated at Rome the first of June last year, was sent to my house by Count *Ernest D'Harrach*; which letter (I know not by what accident) having been nine months on the road, has at length put me in possession of your surprising mock-heroic poem. I have attentively read, and greatly admired it; nor do I see it possible for me, without being guilty of usurpation, to arrogate to myself the title of your Master, with which through excess of politeness, you have qualified me in your letter. How could I possibly communicate to You, that ardent, and prodigiously fertile vigour of fancy, which I feel but too sensibly I do not possess? How, immersed as I have always been, even to a fault, in my constant endless natural doubts, could I inspire you with that frank and noble ardour, with which you have dared to open and pursue a road hitherto
unknown,

unknown, through which you have mounted to the fummit of Parnassus? Ah, my good Abate, assault not, I beseech you, my due moderation with temptations so violent: do justice to your well-known merit: accept of the sincere sentiments of gratitude which I protest, both for the valuable gift, and the manifest gratuitous partiality with which you honour me, and which I most amply return; and permit me, instead of arrogating the title of Master, to subscribe myself your faithful Servant.

Vienna, February 26, 1778.

L E T T E R XXXII.

TO THE SAME.

WHOEVER shall read the lively, moral, and festive composition, entitled *Il Tempio della Follia, The Temple of Folly*, will be obliged to confess, that the author of it is truly a poet, both by art and nature. I have re-perused it always with new pleasure; I have admired its ingenuity, and harmonious facility; and have discovered in it many incontestable truths, which have always been before our eyes, without my ever seeing them.

them. Congratulate yourself in my name, if you please, and in that of the worthy Count *Girolamini*,

In order to avoid much writing, (an œconomy at present to me but too necessary) I answer at once the letter which accompanied your poem, and that which you sent with the letter of the Abate *Salvini*, full of affectionate and kind expressions, which I return from the bottom of my heart.

Drive from your thoughts, my dear Sig. *Galfo*, as evil temptations, the desire of crossing the Alps, in order to undeceive yourself concerning my merit; and be constant to bear with me at a distance. Convinced of the goodness of your heart, I shall freely avail myself of your generous offers, whenever any urgent occasion presents itself: or, rather I shall begin now, by loading you with injunctions to continue to me your affection and regard; to believe me invariably yours; and never to doubt that I am with the truest esteem and gratitude, &c.

Vienna, July 25, 1778.

The Abate *Salvini*'s application to *Metastasio*, being mentioned in the preceding letter,

ter, this seems to be the place for its insertion.

L E T T E R XXXIII.

TO THE ABATE LUCA SALVINI.

I AM extremely grateful for your obliging attention in making me acquainted with the luminous progress of our academy; which, as you inform me, is rendered more illustrious every day, by frequent and sublime aggregations; and I should be extremely proud, if it were in my power to procure it the gratification of which my worthy colleagues are at present so ambitious. But this is not the time for thinking of it; for who would propose a place in a literary academy, to a prince not only occupied with his state affairs in Vienna, but actually in the camp of Bohemia, regulating the motions of two hundred thousand armed men, who depend upon his nod? and even if he were in his capital, in the bosom of the most profound and tranquil peace, my due respect would not permit me to utter with my lips the proposition which you suggest. So much the less, as what
lately

lately happened at Paris is sufficient to discourage such a liberty; where, though the Emperor honoured a meeting of the most celebrated of the royal academies with his presence, yet he neither desired, nor was it proposed to him, as I have ever learned, to become an integral part of it. Perhaps some person high in office, honoured with the familiarity of his sovereign, availing himself of the opportunity of chusing some favourable moment, might risk the mentioning such a business; but these are not operations for such as me, obliged by prudence to confine myself within the narrow limits to which I am restricted by the duties of my office. You will, I hope, excuse my perhaps too great timidity, which may be indulged to an excess; but remember, that at present, my age will not allow me to attempt the correction of natural defects, or bad habits. Punish me not for this involuntary crime, by diminishing my favour, and and believe me, with the highest respect and regard, &c.

Vienna, June 25, 1778.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXIV.

TO SIG. MATTHIAS VERAZI,
Secretary to his Highness the Elector Palatine.

By the opportunity of a courier, I was speedily furnished with a copy of *Europa riconosciuta*, which you have been so obliging as to send me. In this composition, I find my friend, Signor Verazi, always equal to himself: flowing, happy, clear, and rich in that enviable fertility of fancy which constitutes the principal merit of dramatic poetry, and which communicates itself to all the inferior arts employed in its support. I rejoice and congratulate you on obtaining the favours of so enlightened a city; and find nothing reprehensible in the book you sent me, except the manifest excess of partiality, with which you publicly speak of me: an excess which I can no otherwise accept, than as a consequence of that dim-sightedness which the friendship with which you honour me occasions.

Vienna, September 3, 1778.

Metastasio

Metastasio, fearful of offending, and ever doubtful of his own favour, both with the public and his Imperial benefactors, could never be prevailed upon to risk the displeasure of either; as he would not venture to print any of his writings, till they had been approved in their performance or perusal while in manuscript, nor to try his influence at a court which he had so long delighted, by soliciting benefits either for himself or friends. And perhaps to this prudent backwardness in solicitation, he owed the countenance and condescension with which he was so long honoured. However benevolent and willing to confer favours gratuitously, princes may be, it is natural for them to keep at a distance the importunate; who by being refused what it may be inconvenient, improper, or impossible to grant, become active and implacable enemies. The following letter in answer to a solicitor for court patronage, through the influence of the poet, will enable the reader to judge of his reasons for putting a negative on the request.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXXV.

TO FATHER FILIPPO STANISLAO MELANO.

THE Sonnet which your reverence has been pleased to send me, is worthy of its ingenious and learned author, and I feel all the weight of gratitude which is due from me, for such a partial remembrance ; and should be proud if it were in my power to manifest my sense of your kindness, by a prompt execution of your respected commands. But as my admirable sovereign is persecuted with an inundation of bad Italian poetry for the most part, which since his journey to Rome, is perpetually pouring in upon him, he has clearly expressed his determination to receive no more. Now how would it be possible for me to have the courage to demand an audience (as there are no other means of getting into his presence), and pretend that he should lend an ear to my poetical lecture, at a time when he is immersed in the serious affairs of a war, which is at present in its most violent fermentation ? By doing this, I should run too great a risk of injuring both the merit of

the author, and my own character, for respect and discretion. I entreat you to suggest to me some more favourable opportunity of demonstrating my obedience, and esteem.

Vienna, January 13, 1779.

In the following letter to the Abate Galfo, we have the poet's opinion of controversy and polemics.

L E T T E R XXXVI.

TO THE ABATE GALFO.

IN the parcel from you, which I received through the favour of the Apostolic Nuncio, I find impressions of two of my letters written to yourself, in which their only merit is the justice which I render to your talents; and the having fulfilled this indispensable duty, somewhat diminishes the mortification which I feel when any of my writings are printed, from that innate want of confidence in myself, which through the whole course of my life, has robbed me in a great measure, of the limited powers which were allowed me. I am extremely pleased at the perfect
analogy

analogy which there appears to be, between my opinions and those of the learned journalists which you mention, and congratulate myself on the occasion. I wish I were able to felicitate you on the acquisition of that tranquil philosophy, which the most excellent authors want, to render them insensible to the inevitable assaults of detraction. But remember, my much respected Abate, that no race of men has been plagued with this abominable contentious spirit, so much as men of learning. Think of *Scaliger*, *Erasmus*, *Schioppus*, *Muretus*, &c. I pity humanity for nothing so much as that infirmity, which by its violence, reduces men, venerable for their doctrine, to the level of actors on a public stage, for the diversion of idiots. If you would avenge yourself and crush envy, it must be done by an increase of merit. And the specific which I prescribe to you, is the only one which I have ever proposed to myself.

It is necessary to be seized (as for my good fortune seems your case) with an excessive degree of kindness and partiality in my favour, to exalt into a model my old Epithalamium, written during the first effervescence of a juvenile fancy, when wholly ignorant

ignorant how much it wanted a bridle. But this kind of solemn approbation, with which you have honoured it, has reconciled me to it so much, that I am now blind to its defects, and am proud, that it has in any degree given occasion to so new, delicate, and pleasing a production as yours ; or rather, that it has in any way seemed to entitle me to a share of your praise. I congratulate you on the constant favour of the muses, and am, &c.

Vienna, March 28, 1779.

L E T T E R XXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR most beautiful Epithalamium, neatly printed, has been delivered to me some days, together with the remarks of the learned journalifts. I have received new pleasure in the perusal of the first, by the masterly manner with which you have contrived to rectify the mistakes of my early inexperienced youth; and in the second, have applauded the exact justice rendered to your extraordinary merit, which encreases every day—Take care of your health for the honour of our
Parnassus

Parnassus ; pity my necessity for brevity, and give me new opportunities of manifesting my obedience to your commands.

Vienna, October 18, 1779.

Though the following letter, which seems the first that has been inserted in the collection of our bard's correspondence to Signor Volta, is dated at so late a period of his life; the affectionate manner in which he expresses his regard, appears to indicate a long, tried, and intimate acquaintance.

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLDO CAMILLA
VOLTA, REGIUS SECRETARY AT MANTUA.

THOUGH extremely eager to receive news of your health and welfare, I have never accused you, my dear and valued friend, of negligence in transmitting it; well knowing with what an inevitable croud of affairs, of every kind, you must be oppressed at your return to Italy: I am, therefore, extremely grateful to you for the justice you have done me, in believing me always, in spite of long

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silence,

silence, the same affectionate friend, and exact calculator of your great merit, admirable talents, and literary treasures with which you are enriched; but above all, I shall ever bear in mind your sweet, and innocent manners, which render you always pleasing to your equals; and shall ever remember my own acquaintance with you among the dearest and most honourable circumstances of my life.

Speak not to me, I entreat you, of *Theatres*, either tragic or comic. The first, which (as far as my powers have enabled me) I have tried to render less absurd, conspire at present to combat common sense: and the second, in the midst of such innumerable, not only supportable, but good and excellent examples with which the French have furnished us, have not yet found a tolerable imitator in Italy. A very mortifying circumstance for our nation! But this subject is too extensive and abundant for a worn-out old writer, which, though in appearance it seems in the same state in which I left it, is in reality subject to all the laws of nature.

Signora Martinetz is extremely flattered, though confused, by the academic patent which does her so much honour. She renders

ders thanks to You for it, as she believes herself indebted to your declared partiality ; and entreats you to represent in more suitable eloquence than she has been able to do in the inclosed letter to her generous promoters, the most humble sentiments of her unfeigned gratitude. Counsellor Martinetz*, Don Domenico, and Ercolino, return you their best acknowledgments for your kind remembrance ; and I embrace you with the most tender and cordial affection.

Vienna, August 9, 1779.

L E T T E R XXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

SIGNOR *Angelo Talassi*† delivered to me, a few days ago, your dear and much respected

* Brother of Mademoiselle Martinetz, Aulic Counsellor, and first keeper of the Imperial library. Metastasio, on his first arrival in Vienna, took up his abode in the house of their father, Signor Nicolo Martinetz, Master of the Ceremonies to the Apostolic Nuncio, with whose family he lived fifty-three years.

† The celebrated *Improvvisatore*; who, when in London about eighteen years ago, by his extemporaneous numbers on a subject given, astonished even Dr. Johnson; who was very incredulous concerning this faculty, till he heard *Talassi improvvisare* at Streatham.

letter, with a magnificent eulogium on the poetical merit of the bearer, to whom I am ready to do all due justice, upon the faith of so enlightened a judge as my friend Signor Volta, even before I have had an opportunity of making the experiment myself. But I fear he has undertaken a very difficult task, in trying to render Italian Poetry familiar and grateful to German ears; especially extemporaneous numbers, which allow not a moment's reflection to the astonished hearer. I shall do every thing in my power to contribute to his favour. But you, who so well know the present paucity of my physical faculties, must proportion to that my hopes of success.

All those whom you have saluted, salute you again; and I, with involuntary and inevitable brevity, most affectionately embrace you, and am, &c.

Vienna, August 18, 1779.

The following letter is the first which appears in the collection, to a new and unknown correspondent, ambitious of the poet's approbation.

LET-

L E T T E R XL.

TO THE ABATE GIOVAN GABRIELLO MAC-
CAFANI.

THE violent and passionate enthusiasm excited in you by the perusal of my poetical trifles, is expressed in so lively a manner, both in prose and verse, that I make no doubt, if you chose it, but that you might ascend to the summit of Parnassus. You have exalted me, Sir, so far above my merit, that in order not to appear a bribed and seduced judge, it is necessary for me to be more sparing than I wish, in rendering due justice to your talents. But I find it impossible to be parsimonious with respect to the candid and affectionate partiality in my favour, which is discoverable in all your expressions: This requires gratitude and reciprocation, and I assure you of both, with the utmost sincerity; and wish for opportunities to give such proofs of them, as shall render it impossible for you to doubt of my being with due respect and esteem, &c.

Vienna, December 20, 1779.

L E T T E R XLI.

TO THE SAME.

THE fable of my sufferings and recovery from a dangerous accident, afforded me new information, and an indubitable proof of your cordial affection for me, as well as of your admirable poetical talents; so that I think myself extremely obliged to the ingenious inventor of the report, and congratulate you, Sir, on your abilities in composing Eulogiums, and on the amiable qualities of your head and heart. The reasons assigned in my first letter, and the imperious authority of age, which, though it malignantly still permits me to write, will not allow me to express so amply as I wish, the true value of your obliging and beautiful compositions, nor the affectionate return, which is due for your candid propensity in my favour: so that I am constrained, most unwillingly, to confine myself to the sincere protestations of gratitude and esteem, with which I am, &c.

Vienna, March 30, 1780.

L E T.

L E T T E R XLII.

TO THE SAME.

THOUGH the business of writing has long since become difficult and laborious to me, and by the laws of nature is rendered more heavy every day, my gratitude will not permit that your very beautiful and truly poetical sonnet, which you have done me the honour to address to me, should remain unnoticed: as it is not only a testimony of your excessive partiality for me, but of your own favour with father Apollo, and the tuneful sisters. I congratulate myself on both, and in return, wish you subjects less sterile and more worthy of your abilities; yet I shall not cease to feel how much I am indebted to them, nor to be with all due respect and esteem, &c.

Vienna, May 1, 1780.

L E T T E R XLIII.

TO THE ABATE GALFO.

By means of our most worthy Apostolic Nunzio *, the infallible SOCRATES came in person six days ago, to inform me, that my dear Sig. *Galfo* had courageously undertaken, and happily sustained, the difficult enterprise of always surpassing himself. The tragedy which has been sent to me, with its vigorous and seducing style, richness of thought, vivacity of imagery, solidity of doctrine in the numerous moral maxims it contains, together with the poetical fire which so happily sparkles in some of the similes, confirms the

* Meaning Monsignore Visconti, the titular bishop of Ephesus, with whose notice I was honoured at Vienna in 1772. His Excellency was a great collector, and not a mean performer, of Italian Catches and Canons, and condescended to furnish me with copies of several scarce and valuable compositions of that kind. See *Present State of Mus. in Germany*, Art. Vienna, p. 285. It was this prelate who observed, when I excused myself for arriving late at dinner, by saying, I had been stopt in the street by processions: *Quei genti son portaitissimi alle processione*: "The Austrians are extremely addicted to processions."

assertions

assertions in this truly philosophical representation. The inevitable infirmities of age forbid me a longer use of the pen; I shall therefore merely subscribe to the sound judgment of the enlightened journalists, who say of you, that your first attempts bear the stamp of a master : *pour des coups d'essai vous faites des coups de maitre.*

Vienna, August 17, 1780.

L E T T E R XLIV.

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLDO CAMILLO
VOLTA.

THOUGH writing, my dear Signor Volta, is extremely inconvenient to me, yet the not answering your cordial expressions is impossible. I too clearly discovered the estimable and amiable qualities of your mind and heart, during your residence here; and I have too much pleasure in telling you how much I love and esteem you, and how constantly I set that value on your worth which you have convinced me you so well deserve. I hope you will frequently remind my much revered Marquis *Andreasi* of my respect. Pray tell him that the Paris edition of all

my works, has already begun to be published, We have already received here three extremely elegant volumes, and next month are promised three more. I wonder that you have not yet received them. If you cannot procure them from any neighbouring city, it will be best to write immediately to the Abate *Giuseppe Pezzana* at Paris, who is the diligent editor,

Signora *Martinetz* is much flattered with your remembrance, and is joined by her whole family in a grateful return of your regard. Our Don *Domenico* will do the same, as soon as I shall inform him of your obliging attentions: assure yourself of my regard and affection, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, July 13, 1780,

L E T T E R XLV.

TO THE SAME.

By the lively manner with which you have been struck at the sight of the elegant Paris edition of my works, I form an idea of my dear Sig. *Volta's* sincere and affectionate friendship; and though I was sure of it before, such an obliging proof of it cannot fail
of

of sweetly stimulating my vanity. I will not dissemble the pleasure which I likewise receive myself, in seeing my children so magnificently cloathed and provided for ; but at the same time, I cannot deny my fears, that this will give a furious opportunity to many people to examine too minutely how well they deserve such an expensive partiality. I believe the edition advances happily ; the Abate *Pezzana* having informed me in his last letter, that the first sheets of the sixth volume went to press on the fourth of last month. The sonnet of Count Bulgarini, is truly beautiful. I not only do it all due justice myself, but successfully procure it from every body else ; nor shall I fail to put it in the road to our Olympus.

I should gladly lengthen my letter ; but my diminished physical faculties hardly permit me to give you a hasty embrace.

Vienna, September 4, 1780.

END OF THE THIRD SECTION.

S E C T I O N I V .

THE letters of our bard have for some time been considerably diminishing, both in number and length ; and the complaints which he so frequently repeats of his want of force and vigour to reply, in the ample manner which he ought, to the few persons with whom he still wishes to keep up a correspondence, seem perfectly real and sincere. He is now (1780) arrived at his eighty-second year, a period to which few mortals are allowed to extend their existence. However, his friend Farinelli, after sixty years trial, is not neglected. His letters to him, though short, compared with those of former times, are not less frequent or affectionate. Eight of these for the present year have been printed, of which we shall give a translation.

L E T T E R I .

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI, AT BOLOGNA.

YOUR letter, written during the last sighs of the old year, has had the power to dispel
the

the hypochondriacal clouds, which, during this severe season, are generally condensed to such a degree, that I seem in danger of losing the small remains of my obstinate patience. Your letter, which breathes nothing but kindness, tranquillity, and that wise equanimity, which preserves an equilibrium amidst all the furious tempests incident to humanity, has inspired me with the wish and faculty of imitating you. Yes, my dear Gemello, in your neat and steady writing, and in that cheerful eloquence with which you inform me of the gay parties which are formed at your country house, I exult in the solid arguments which they afford me, of your being still in possession of that solid health of body and of mind, which will not only preserve your philosophical gaiety in misfortune, but still have the power of communicating it to those with whom you converse. May that Omnipotence by which you have been so partially endowed, long allow you the enjoyment of these blessings, and second the prayers of your constant Gemello!

I have described the character of your Ambassador to the Countess *Figuerola* and Monsignor *Perlas*, presenting to them, as my credentials, your original letter, which they
have

have entirely read, and highly commended ; your gratitude is due to them for the pleasure which they express in their remembrance of you, whom indeed it would not be easy to forget, among the many who daily propose you as an example of wonderful abilities, united with candour, and innocent manners.

But I entreat you, who have already gained me the favour of so many and such illustrious persons, to be careful in preserving it for me, by bearing testimony to my gratitude and respect, and reciprocal return of wishes for their prosperity. You know that I am now no longer a man to write letters of great length ; but as an ancient inhabitant of my heart, you ought to know its most secret and recondite recesses : and therefore, I desire you to inform yourself, of all that your most faithful friend and Gemello would write, if he were able.

Vienna, January 13, 1780

L E T T E R II.

TO THE SAME.

Your last chearful and affectionate letter, by the pleasant humour which runs through
it

It from the beginning to the end, has nearly dissipated the dark clouds which obscured my hemisphere ; and made me blush at my inability to assume a similar disposition, notwithstanding the pompous philosophical axioms so ostentatiously displayed in my writings. You, in the midst of frequent earthquakes and the indiscreet irregularities of your health, are not only able to defend yourself from perturbation, but capable of conceiving, arranging, and writing, musical compositions, which exhibit all the science and practice of an excellent contrapuntist. The Duet which you have had the kindness to send me, is marvellous, not only for the difficulty of the labour which you have contrived to disguise in so masterly a manner, and the lively expression of the words, but for the opportunities it affords to a fine and cultivated voice, to display its powers, in swells, shakes, beats, *appogiature*, *volate*, and all those extemporaneous and unexpected passages and embellishments, which are indebted to you for their existence*. I have
 already

* We have here a comprehensive description of good composition and excellent performance. The poet, however, speaks not only with approbation, but eulogy, of his friend's invention and execution of difficult divisions ; talents which

already heard it performed several times, by persons extremely skilful and intelligent, not only in execution, but in the laws of harmony; who were so enchanted with the composition, as to comply with infinite pleasure with my eagerness to have it repeated again and again.

We are not persecuted here with the frightful threats of your earthquakes, but for more than two months we have been struggling with the most horrid and obstinate winter which can be imagined, and without the least respite. Figure to yourself all that is most cruel in this dreadful season, and you will conceive some part of the insults and inconveniences with which we are surrounded: impetuous freezing winds, ice harder than marble, deep, incessant, and permanent snow, which covers and renders all objects of one colour: so that to keep open a little intercourse between the inhabitants, whole regiments of pioneers, with shovels,

which he condemns so severely in others. Farinelli, with his wonderful, natural, as well as acquired powers, was the Archetype of all the rapid and difficult execution, which has been carried to such excess in modern times, as to fatigue and annihilate admiration; which exists no longer than its objects are rare and extraordinary.

spades,

spades, pickaxes, brooms and carts, are constantly employed; and even these are not a match, with all their fatigue and diligence, for the quantity of snow which is falling without intermission, and renews and increases their work. The Danube, with new and incredible vicissitudes, sometimes fluid, and sometimes congealed, has at length broken all the great bridges, by which the provisions are brought to this populous city from Hungary and Moravia, which are the chief dispensers of its nourishment; and every thing is become so dear, that the common people are unable to procure the necessaries of life. But this *noënia* is too long, and tiresome. Adieu, my dear Gemello. Let us preserve ourselves for better times; and in the mean while do you continue to love, and believe me, yours most faithfully:

Vienna, February 24, 1780.

L E T T E R III.

TO THE SAME.

I RECEIVED a few days ago, a most affectionate letter from you, with a splendid pre-

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sent

sent of *liqueurs* and sweetmeats, with which your tender and generous friendship, by excess of kindness, puts my moderation, so necessary to second childhood, to too great a trial. With this *flotta*, I have likewise received, the Aria of *Thyrsis*, of your composition. I waited for leisure to examine the whole, before I gave an account of all the treasures with which you have put me in possession. But during my delay, comes another letter from you, big with a Cantata, produced on the banks of the *Manzanare*, by the prolific vein of Bonechi, and rendered admirable by the enchanting notes of my incomparable Gemello, who on all occasion, manifests how much art and nature have conspired to distinguish him. The same golden mine is discoverable, whence the duet *Mille volte mio tesoro*, &c. was dug. But through the uniformity of style, that ingenious diversity appears, of which expert composers so well know the use; wonderfully combining together the lively expression of two effects, totally contrary. Adieu, my head will not permit me to use the Asiatic style to-day. Remember my respects and salutations to those persons who honour me with their remembrance:
and

and continue yourself to me, what has been,
and ever will be to you, your most faithful.

Vienna, March 29, 1780.

LETTER, IV.

TO THE SAME.

ON Monday, the 17th instant, I had advice from the custom-house, of the arrival of the elegant little Petronian chest*, big with sweetness to seduce both the ear and the palate. My first care was to have it instantly brought home, the second to procure me the delight of being in your company, at least mentally, continuing to drink my delicious ardent liquor from the little flask which you had already broached, and to finish the remains of the Ferrarese peaches, defective only in the small portion which you had tasted: so that we have eaten and drank together, by means of your kind invention, in spite of the enormous tract of land which divides us. I shall make grateful and frequent use myself of the incomparable

* St. Petronius is the Patron Saint of BOLOGNA, whence the chest was sent.

peaches, but much more rarely and sparingly (against my will) of the spirituous potation, which by its too great activity, puts all the indocile nerves of my head into such a tumult, that they are dancing like those of a bacchanal, and continue a long time to deprive me of natural repose. Imagine not, however, that your favours will remain useless ; I shall easily find coadjutors ready to do justice to the precious merchandise, and who will be most grateful to me, for the permission. The Palate satisfied, I shall not neglect the Ear, which expects my notice with impatience ; and the Air of *Tirsi*, excellently performed, makes me taste a new and more exquisite pleasure, by the union of its infinite merit with my own self-love : for though in this Air, not only the humanity, the sweetness, and science of my Gemello triumph, but the genius of the words, to which he has so wonderfully adapted the melody, that I find them infinitely more beautiful in his music, than I was ever able to make them with my pen. The same most correct performer*, at length, without interrupting her pleasant vocal employment, let me hear the

* Mademoiselle Martinetz.

two beautiful Sonatas, which are visibly the legitimate daughters of my dear Gemello's brain; and please me so much, that I have resolved to hear them frequently repeated; but by the same hand: as I should esteem it a sacrilege to defile them with the inexperience of my own, which deprived of the necessary practice, imperfectly assists the little theory with which I have been able to furnish myself. The merit of both these pieces is equal; but that of the first in G natural, in my mind, has some advantage over the minor sister*.

If my head would allow me, I should be very prolix in my thanks; but that not being the case, read them in my heart, where you have so long been an inhabitant: pay my debts with the dear and venerated persons who remember me: put not my too necessary moderation so often to the trial with your seducing presents, and continue to believe me, &c.

Vienna, April 9, 1780.

* In the year 1770, when I visited *Farinelli*, at Bologna, his chief musical study and amusement, was composing and playing pieces which he made expressly for his different harpsichords, of which he had a great number of the best and most curious of the time. See *Present State of Music, in France and Italy*. Art. Bologna.

L E T T E R V.

TO THE SAME.

WHEN I answered your last letter but one, I was at war with my maladies and infirmities, and so stupified by both, that I knew not whether I was male or female; so that I neglected to thank you for a beautiful *Canzonetta* of your composition, which I found among your sweet-meats. I confess my sin, and beg your absolution. Enquire not, my dear Gemello, after my worthless health, she is unworthy of your notice: always the same impertinent strumpet. However, I hoped that by the return of good weather, she would be a little reformed—but not entirely to relinquish hope, I have recourse to our Spanish proverb, which still allows me a day or two more, ere I give way to despair: *hasta el quarenta de maio no te quit-tes el saio**.

If through caprice, you determined to write down, and execute, something in mu-

* This proverb occurred to our bard on another occasion, see above, p. 205.

fic,

fic, imperfectly, you would find the undertaking impracticable: the machine organized by nature, to the most perfect harmony, and the heart sensible to the best passions, as well as long habit, would oppose and vanquish such an extravagant enterprise. So thinks, and always says, the studious performer of your productions; who justly admires you, having been long since informed by me, not only of your professional merit, but of the other invaluable qualities which are peculiar to yourself, and by which you will ever be distinguished. She is, therefore, proud that you are pleased with her approbation, which does herself honour, and will do you no great harm. Accept it, therefore, and enroll her among the numerous band of persons, who, *avec connoissance de cause*, admire and respect you.

I would go on, but my head commands me to *halt*, and I must obey. Pay my debts for me, to all my dear and respectable creditors around you: particularly to the most noble house of *Spada*, not forgetting father *Guardiano* of the seraphic family, and continue obstinately to believe me your most faithful, &c.

Vienna, June 1, 1780.

LETTER VI.

TO THE SAME.

My worthless head may protest against it as much as it pleases, but it shall not deprive me of the pleasure of answering your most affectionate letter of the 26th of June. But what shall I talk about? shall my poetical whimsies be discussed? I have written so many in my life, and talked about them so much, that it would be a reprehensible delicacy to blush at mentioning them to my Gemello, who *ab immemorabili* must have seen all my defects; but he on the contrary, exalts them, as laudable and exemplary qualities. One of the most distinct merits of the indefatigable Signora Martinetz, is the knowing how to do justice to your studious and enchanting notes, and to see in them that uncommon art, which distinguishes the beautiful from the wonderful; in which talent there must consequently be a union of natural gifts, with long experience, and an intelligent and constant application, in order to investigate the certain sources of that perfect harmony,

harmony, which has a despotic power over the emotions of feeling hearts. In short, your admirer believes she does honour to herself, by honouring you ; and numbers your friendship and patronage among her dearest and most estimable acquisitions.

I congratulate you (not without some little spice of envy) on the vicinity of your gardens of the Hesperides to the most venerated house of *Spada*, and consequently grieve at the painful reflection of the impossibility of my ever being of the party.

I feel myself very much honoured by the obliging mention which has been made of me to you by the worthy Padre Martini, and his learned companion, the Abate Mingarelli ; the first ought to be already convinced, long ago, of the high and just estimation in which, with the whole world, I hold, and ever shall hold, his merit. And to the second, not unknown to me, I am particularly beholden, for giving me an opportunity of declaring my esteem and ambition to procure his patronage. Adieu, dear Gemello ; I am tired, and must ere this have tired you. Therefore, inform yourself, of all that you already know I would say, if I were able.

Vienna, July 13, 1780.

L E T.

L E T T E R VII.

TO THE SAME.

WHENCE, for heaven's sake, could my dear Gemello have taken the new and unexpected idea of making me independent at his expence, by a pious and unmerited stroke of generosity? The very worthy Padre Guardiano, to my incredible surprise, informed me of it by a letter which I received by the last post, and has made me conceive all the grandeur of your true affection for me. If my faculties were not absorbed by so many indispensable anterior debts, I should profit from your admirable example, and imitate your liberality; but being utterly unable to change the circumstances of my situation, I beg of you to accept in return, my grateful and sincere acknowledgment of being your debtor*.

My most tormenting head obliges me to measure my words: so that I must hasten to

* It does not appear by any of the printed letters, in what the generous proposition of Farinelli consisted; it probably was his wish that the poet would spend the remainder of his days under his own roof, at Bologna.

entreat

entreat you to load in my stead, our exemplary and partial seraphic friend, with all the expressions of gratitude which are due to him on my account, and believe me to be your most obliged and affectionate Gemello.

Vienna, August 24, 1780.

L E T T E R V I I I .

TO THE SAME.

YOUR most affectionate letter of the 18th of last month, is so full of expressions and sentiments worthy of two fond twins, that I perfectly conceive by it the full extent of your regard for me, and what mine ought to be for you. I shall take no pains to persuade you what I am, with respect to you, as your ideas would not so exactly correspond with mine, if you had not long since been convinced of the sincerity of my affection.

Signora Martinetz has learned to know your worth from her infancy, by my continual and authentic relations; and encreasing in the manner she has done since, in harmonical knowledge, indeed to a greater degree than was intended or expected, she has discovered by her own science, the solid foundation

foundation upon which my reasoning was built, from which she derived her early ideas of your extraordinary merit. She is extremely thankful for your most obliging compliance with her wishes concerning your select musical labours; and proud of the generous offer of your friendship, she most eagerly seeks for some opportunity of manifesting her sense of your kindness; and I will be answerable for the sincerity of her flattering expressions.

I congratulate you on having, at length, after so long a parenthesis, again recovered the worthy family of *Spada* for your neighbours; among whom, by mere dint of wishing it, I have more than once in a dream, found myself. Kifs all their hands for me, most respectfully, I entreat you, and assure them of my veneration.

I envy the three first volumes in great and in small, of the magnificent and elegant Paris edition of my writings, being in the hands of my dear Gemello: but I hope their contents will be thought more valuable, thus ornamented, than I could ever persuade myself they would be. Pay, I entreat you, all the debts of compliment for which I am
answerable

answerable to your obliging and benevolent friends.

Vienna, August 31, 1780.

LETTER IX.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR kindest of all letters, written the 4th instant, found me in the most unhappy and afflicting circumstances that I could possibly apprehend in the course of my life. I have lost my august and ever adorable Patroness, Benefactress, and Mother; a loss for which I have not the least hope of ever consoling myself! It is unnecessary to describe my situation to You; your fortitude has been put to the same trial, and you know what compassion fellow-sufferers deserve. I should now be your Gemello, in the virtue with which you supported your loss; but with which I confess I do not feel myself provided. Incapable at present of speaking to you upon any other subject, I must entreat you to say for me all that is proper and respectful to those where you are, who honour me with their remembrance and commiseration.

Vienna, December 23, 1780.

This

This princess, (Maria Theresa of Austria, Empress of Germany, and Queen of Hungary) who had been educated with the most tender care by the emperor her father, was early initiated into the mysteries of the elegant arts, to which she remained a liberal patroness, amidst all the perils and vicissitudes of her reign, to the end of her life. Her piety has been thought to border on bigotry ; but if we may judge of its effect, by the tranquillity, happiness, and affection of her people, compared with the turbulence, discontent, and detestation, of the subjects of her unprincipled, philosophical, and disorganizing successor, we may suppose that too much religion is less mischievous in a sovereign, than too little. In the two long wars with her formidable foe, the late King of Prussia, she supported the frequent reverses of her fortune with abilities, fortitude, and dignity. And after a reign of forty years, in which she deservedly merited the title of Parent of her people, she died universally regretted, and her name and reign are still remembered with the utmost reverence and regret, by her surviving subjects.



A considerable part of her life, was employed in bestowing benefits on the indigent, particularly orphans of both sexes: and among the last words which she was able to utter, are recorded the following, to her son and successor, of which history has not yet disputed the truth: "If I have done any thing reprehensible during my reign, it has certainly been without my knowledge; for I have always had the public good in view. My heart has never been hardened against the unhappy: and this is the greatest comfort of my last moments." She had been made acquainted with the business of the cabinet, by her father, at fourteen years of age, and attended his councils. The frequency of her petitions in favour of worthy objects, made the emperor one day cry out, "You seem to think a sovereign has nothing to do but to grant favours,"——to which seeming rebuke, she answered: "I see nothing else that can make a crown supportable:" and these were not words lightly uttered without feeling. Innumerable instances of her benevolence and pity for the distressed, are recorded. Having perceived a sick soldier on duty, at one of the gates of her palace, she immediately ordered him
to

to be relieved; and conducted in a carriage to the hospital. And being informed that this young man's disorder proceeded from indigence, and his separation from a mother, whom he was no longer able to support by the labour of his hands, she sent for the poor woman from Brinn in Moravia, which is 120 miles from Vienna, in order that she might be with her son. "I am delighted," says the empress, to her; on her arrival, to restore to you a child who is so tenderly attached to you. I will give you a pension for your support, to indemnify you for the loss of that assistance which you used to receive from his labour; and I recommend to you both, always to continue to love and cherish each other. *These are my recreations.*"—The good woman, transported to hear her sovereign speak to her with such condescending goodness, cried out—"Though I have no other child than this which you restore to me, and whom I love more than my life, I would this instant see him expire, if his death could be of any service to your majesty." The Empress Queen, without any other guard than the hearts of her subjects, was accessible to all, without distinction of rank. "I am only a beggarly peasant, (said a poor Bohemian labourer)

labourer) but I can speak to our good queen, whenever I please ; and she listens to me as if I was a Lord.”—The empress one day returning to her palace, perceived a woman and two children whom she could hardly drag along. Hunger had driven them from their miserable dwelling. “How have I offended Providence, (says she) that I should be witness of such a sight ?” And immediately gave orders that her own dinner should be carried to them: and had herself no other refecton than the tears she shed over the mother and her almost famished offspring. “They are my children (says she) and shall never again be driven to beggary.”—“I lament the time I am forced to give to sleep, as it is a robbery from my people.” The partiality of her Imperial majesty, to the character as well as genius of Metastasio, must have been long since discovered by the reader of these Memoirs, and will be further manifested in the sequel.

L E T T E R X.

TO FARINELLI.

WHILE you wrote to me in your bed in the neighbourhood of Bologna, your most kind letter of the 20th of last month; I, (like a good twin) was in bed at Vienna, where I was confined by a violent fever, and an erysipelas in my leg. This accidental sympathy justifies our assumed twinship. The fever obliged me to keep my bed a few days, and departed; but the departure of the erysipelas does not yet permit me to quit the house.

I thank you for informing me of the safe arrival of the books, and for the generous and kind thankfulness with which you received them. I dare not enter on the subject of my loss: you know by experience, that wounds of this kind do not soon digest, and that they never cicatrise till after a long lapse of time, if at all!

Signora Martinetz renders you her best thanks for your courteous remembrance of her; which she returns with sincere sentiments

ments of the high esteem that is due to such excellence as yours. I most earnestly hope that you will soon subdue your importunate complaints, and am with usual twinly kindness, yours most faithfully.

Vienna, February, 1781.

L E T T E R XI.

TO THE SAME.

I AT length vanquish my pardonable laziness of old age, to tell my dear Gemello, that I am always his, in spite of infirmities, which as usual, never neglect to exercise my tired patience: and to inform him, that I have consigned to Signor *Milani*, a friend and correspondent of our most worthy Padre *Francisco Maria*, the three subsequent volumes of the grand Paris edition of my works: that is, the 4th, 5th, and 6th, which will be delivered to you with more punctuality than the former volumes. These have been some time in my possession; but I kept them back for three plates which were wanting, from the indolence of the Paris engraver. I hope that the other two *livraisons*, which are to complete the edition, will be more regular.

regular. Adieu, dear Gemello. Neglect not your health, as you prize mine : Signora *Martinetz* will not suffer me to omit her devout respects; and with my old age and obstinate affection, I continue to subscribe myself, &c.

Vienna, April 6, 1781.

L E T T E R X I I .

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE this moment received, most incomparable Gemello, your very affectionate letter ; and though I wrote to you but three or four days ago, to inform you that I had consigned the 4th, 5th, and 6th volumes of the Paris edition of my works to Signor *Milani*, I will not leave wholly unanswered your cordial wishes for my health and peace of mind. Would to heaven the tranquillity, which you were able to muster in writing to me, had required less patience to obtain ; but at our age, it is no small instance of divine mercy, that we still exist. Signora *Martinetz*, in this letter, repeats her just sentiments of gratitude and esteem, which I inserted in my last : and with a thousand,
and

and a thousand affectionate wishes for your happiness, I am, &c.

Vienna, April 12, 1781.

LETTER XIII.

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY, the 28th instant, I received your very affectionate letter of the 15th, and answer it immediately, from mere eagerness to talk with you, though this letter cannot depart these three days. I perceive that though these earthquakes and complaints will not suffer you to remain in peace, yet, in spite of them, you have the wonderful courage and strength of mind to keep up your spirits, and to amuse yourself with running over the keys of the harpsichord, or with a plate of Neapolitan Maccaroni, which there is less hope of obtaining here from our most learned cooks, than a Cardinal's hat. I do not envy you this enjoyment, because I always seem to partake of whatever belongs to you, be it good or bad; yet, I hope you will not fail to deplore my privation. I wish a good journey and a prosperous expedition to our worthy *Padre Guardiano*, who has so

s 3

speedily

speedily put you in possession of the last published volumes of my trifles: and when I receive the rest, I shall not fail to put them in the same road. You know that my brevity is not a matter of choice; therefore, receive with good humour, though short, my tender embraces, and believe me, &c.

Vienna, May 29, 1781.

LETTER XIV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR dear letter of the 11th inst. though a mixture of sour and sweet, has comforted me extremely; as after that abominable addition of *ai! ai!** of which you give me an account, you appease me by speaking of dinners, harpsichords, maccaroni with *zucchillo*, and admirable company; convincing me that silence has not robbed me of the smallest portion of your love; and I firmly believe, that you will think the same of me. But, my beloved Gemello, the whole months of July and August, and

* *Ai ai* is a contraction of *aiuto-aiuto*, help! help! murder!

seventeen days of the present month, we have inhabited here the torrid zone, without being able to breathe, day or night, from a continual burning and suffocating heat beyond what has ever been remembered in this country. My poor nerves, which hitherto only dreaded cold, are scandalized to such a degree by this strange irregularity, that encreasing their painful tensions and tremors, particularly in my aching and confused head, they have rendered me unable to read, write, and almost to think ; leaving me, however, an outward appearance of tolerable health, which does not augment my own patience, though it considerably diminishes the compassion of others, to which I am but too well entitled. The very worthy Count *Gaddi* has frequently seen me in similar situations, and therefore has given you accounts of the florid and happy state of my health, to which I can by no means subscribe. I love and esteem this Count extremely, and have here many rivals, whence I hope that your acquaintance with each other, produces reciprocal pleasure.

Divide and disseminate my thanks and respects in due proportions among the Marchioness *Spada*, Messrs. *Pignatelli*, and *Valdivia*,

the incomparable *Padre Guardiano*, the Abate *Mingarelli*, and all those in your quarter of the world who remember me : and in return, I shall have the merit of securing the Countess di *Figuera*, and *Monsignor Perlas*, as I have already comforted the indefatigable Signora *Martinez* with your obliging remembrance. Do you continue obstinately to love me with all my infirmities and complaints, which will never be able to make me forget you for a single moment.

Vienna, September 27, 1781.

LETTER XV.

TO THE SAME.

YOUR amiable letters, full of cordiality, grace, and candour, are always dear to me, and efficacious restoratives, in refreshing my worn-out patience, at the obstinate tension of the nerves of my head, by which I am eternally persecuted. I am therefore extremely grateful to you for this succour which you administer to me from time to time. But that I might enjoy it more amply, I wish most ardently, that your importunate
complaints

complaints would render the exercise of your charitable assistance, which is of such singular use to me, less painful to yourself. But let us change the subject, and not contaminate the consolation, which, by our cartel, we are mutually bound to afford each other.

I rejoice in the new and desirable acquisition which you have made, by your acquaintance with the Imperial minister, and his most worthy noble family, and likewise with the most learned *Padre Maestro Gazzaniga*: of the merit of all whom I judge by their esteem for you. To the last, whom you will always have the happiness of retaining with you, give, I beseech you, a thousand affectionate compliments in my name; and tell him that I shall never cease to love and esteem him, and to feel grateful for his constant demonstrations of benevolence. Happiness attend our incomparable wanderer, father *Guardiano*! who, among his other innumerable faculties, has the power to inspire my delightful Gemello with cheerfulness and good humour, at his charming dinners, his harpsichord, and the conversations of his select parties.

I am arrived at the 7th, 8th, and 9th volumes of the Paris edition, and shall transmit

mit them to you by the usual road; but I would first run them through, to discover the errors that may still remain uncorrected; and at present, the tremulous nerves of my eyes are not fit for such an operation (as you may discover by my hand-writing.) If this impediment should be obstinate, I shall postpone the revision, which I believe is not very necessary.

Signora *Martinez*, in composing an oratorio, which she has just finished, has always invoked your harmonical influence. Adieu, dear Gemello. Assure yourself of my obstinate perseverance in loving you, and believe me, with my whole heart, &c.

Vienna, November 14, 1781,

L E T T E R X V I .

TO THE SAME.

YESTERDAY, December 16th, I ordered the 7th, 8th, and 9th volumes of the new Paris edition, in 4to, to be consigned to our faithful friend, Signor *Milani*, in order to forward them to you: and as I am informed, that our Padre *Guardiano* is not at Bologna, I shall lodge my advice to him in your hands, being

being certain, that he will have notice of this new distribution of books elsewhere. We have now three-fourths of the impression, and I hope that our patience will not be put to any great trial, ere we receive the remaining three volumes.

The Grand Duke and Dutches of Muscovy, who you so much admired at Bologna, and whom we at present possess in Vienna, where they are justly adored, not only for their elevated rank, but personal qualities, by which they are rendered more illustrious and dignified, will abandon us the first day of the new year, and I begin already to deplore our loss.

Pray combat the winter valiantly, as I strive to do, though I have no reason to be proud of my bravery. The female composer devoutly salutes you; and I, with my usual dose from the *vasi pizzecchillo*, assure you that I am yours most faithfully.

Vienna, December 17, 1781.

No more than two or three letters of this year, except those to Farinelli, appear in the printed collection; so much were the poet's strength and activity diminished, as well as the number of surviving correspondents!

LET-

L E T T E R X V I I .

TO THE ADVOCATE LEOPOLD CAMILLO
VOLTA ;

Secretary and Prefect of the Royal Library at Mantua.

AN erysipelas in my left leg, to complete my sufferings, has confined me to my bed for many days, and which does not yet permit me to quit my domestic habitation, is the cause of this late arrival of my answer to your last letter. I have perused and re-perused the sonnet, which I find worthy of the subject, and of the author : and I am gratified with the praises which it receives from those hearers to whom I take care to communicate it. I return you my thanks, not only for being so obliging as to favour me with a copy of it, but also for the public confirmation of the just judgment I formed of your talents from the first day I had the happiness of conversing with you in this capital. Continue to honour me in the same manner. Ascribe my silence to the irreparable loss with which we have been afflicted : accept a
reciprocal

reciprocal return of the compliments with which you commissioned me for the inhabitants and frequenters of this house; and continue to believe me, with my accustomed esteem and affection, yours, &c.

Vienna, February 1, 1781.

LETTER XVIII.

TO THE SAME.

I RECOGNIZE, my dear Signor Volta, all the sensibility of your zealous friendship in the indignation which you manifest in communicating to me, the *Canzonetta della vita umana*, printed under my name at Florence. The merit of composing it is not mine, and I should be sorry to rob the author of his fame: you will therefore oblige me extremely, by acquainting our friends, how much I abhor the character of a Plagiarist. I am ignorant how it happens to be my fortune, that so many generous poets should undertake to assist me in the production of children. The imperfections of my legitimate and natural offspring (not all very well known to me) are sufficient to disturb and plague me, without being burthened with the

A commerce with which I have been so honoured and delighted, would have gratified my vanity in the highest degree; but my poor exhausted humanity, has, at length, much against my will, obliged me to ask quarter; and God knows the difficulty which I had in obtaining it. Now you will be so good, my dear Abate, to tell me with what face I could send public documents to Rome, of my being able to comply with the request of others, after having protested that it was not in my power to oblige him? You are in no kind of want of my suffrages, and those which I have antecedently given, will leave no doubt of my respect for your productions. I shall, however, read what you have sent me, when I can do it with a mind less oppressed, and with eyes more steady. In the mean time, I beg you will not conspire with nature, in diminishing your regard, as she has done my activity, but continue to love me as I am, and believe me, with usual esteem.

Vienna, June 11, 1781.

The following is the only letter that appears addressed to the same person. It seems an answer to a letter of thanks from the author of a recent Italian translation

of Homer, to Metastasio, for his approbation, of that version.

LETTER XX.

TO THE ABATE GIUSEPPE BOZZOLI.

THE justice which I rendered to your happy Homeric versions, was not so much to increase the celebrity of your literary talents, become so illustrious by universal applause, as to do credit to my own judgment ; which if it had been different, would have proved, that I was ignorant what learning, vigour of mind, good sense, and constancy, were necessary to conceive, undertake, and conduct, to a happy termination, so long and difficult an enterprise. You are, therefore, only obliged to me for the advantages which I have procured to myself. Cherish, I entreat you, your gratuitous, partial propensity towards me, and extend a similar indulgence to my age and infirmities, which hardly allow me to assure you, in this short manner, of the esteem and affection, with which I shall ever remain your, &c.

Vienna, October 24, 1781.

This is, chronologically, the last letter in the collection, to any of Metastasio's correspondents, except Farinelli, to whom we now return.

L E T T E R XXI.

TO SIGNOR FARINELLI.

OUR last letters on the same subject, met upon the road ; hence, my dear Gemello, I should have had nothing to write about, if luckily I had not an account to give you of an unexpected visit from Signor Filippo Cavalier *Gatteschi*, captain in the service of Russia, with another officer, and a Greek lady, his consort, who surprised me, and remained a considerable time in conversation ; informing me of the state of Italy, and the north, whither they are now returning. During this visit, I forgot my complaints, more than usual, while suffering from the intense cold of this climate and season : they sung, spoke of you, and the memory of my dear Gemello is a specific against all my sufferings. The Cavalier, your relation, is extremely courteous and animated, and I wish him prosperity equal to his merit. If writing were not so painful
to

to me; I should say much more; but we understand each other without speaking: that is, present my respects, salutations, and thanks, to those at Bologna, to whom I am in debt; preserve yourself carefully, during this horrid season; accept the compliments of Signora *Martinetz*, and believe me always more than ever yours.

Vienna, January 3, 1782.

L E T T E R XXII.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE no materials, my dear Gemello, for a letter to-day, and my head protests against the use of the pen: and yet I cannot resist the desire of giving you a thousand embraces, at least in writing, and returning you a thousand thanks for the sincere and kind pleasure you manifest at the great honour which it has pleased the northern princes to confer on me. The phenomenon, however, will not produce the same effect on all, and I have reason to fear, that many, and perhaps the greater part, will be puzzling their brains in finding out what

proportion

proportion my merit can possibly bear, with such an honourable distinction*: an enquiry which cannot be of much advantage to me. But let us have no more of it, at present. I think of nothing now, but the pleasure it has afforded you, and the proof it furnishes me of your true and constant affection, of which, however, I had not the least occasion. Give liberally, and in due proportion, the usual return of regard and affection to all those around you, who honour me with their remembrance, and accept the reverence of the female composer. Adieu. I shall write more fully when the wicked nerves of my head will permit; *in tanto vasi a bizeffe*, and am, &c.

Vienna, January 24, 1782.

* The Grand Duke and Dutcheſs of Muſcovy, in making the Tour of Europe, when they arrived at Vienna made early and earneſt enquiries after the Imperial Laureat, with whoſe merit they were perfectly well acquainted, not only from tradition, but his dramatic productions, which had been as frequently and magnificently repreſented, and as admirably ſet, ſung, and performed at the court of Peterſburgh, as in any great city in Europe. Not content with all the information which they could acquire of others, concerning his private life, theſe great perſonages viſited the venerable bard in perſon; and when his character, talents, and age, are conſidered, the honour of the viſit ſeems reciprocal, exalting the good taſte of theſe princes, as much as the reputation of the poet.

L E T-

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

AH, Ah ! I did not expect this from You ! After so many expressions of affection, publicly to become my rival in poetry ! And that no doubt might remain, a faithful and authentic account has been transmitted to me, signed by two unexceptionable witnesses, whom I highly love and honour ; and how is this rancorous rivalry and *jaloufie du metier* to be reconciled with the tenderness of twinship ? The effort would be vain. It is lucky for you, that your letter arrived to inflame and encrease my bile, at a time when I was unable to write : not only on account of my nervous head-ach, but a whitloe, that is, *pe no mémardetto punticio*, in the stitching or thimble finger (in the good language of seamstresses) the best finger of my right hand, which obliged me to have recourse to the Cæsarian surgeon for assistance, which I have not yet completely obtained. In the first impetus of my professional jealousy, God knows what indecorous expressions might have escaped my pen. But let

us change the subject, as I feel, that speaking of it, rouses irascibility ; and I believe it is not your wish, that I should revenge myself upon you in music—What would become of your fame, if I did ?—No, no—Make as many verses as you please. I shall forgive the insult ; and by the power of twinship, I will suppose them to be written by myself. I know not of what *flotta* you speak, if you mean to fill it with poetry, it shall be welcome ; but I protest against all things else. I can write no more. Act liberally for me, and for Signora Martinetz, in giving and taking compliments, and let us seal our reconciliation, by a million of mental embraces, and, with usual wishes, be to each other “as we were wont to be.”

Vienna, February 11, 1782,

L E T T E R XXIV,

TO THE SAME.

WHAT ! then is envy, in mercy to humanity, no more ? Neither here, nor elsewhere, during this dreadful season, can I find a friend or acquaintance who does not complain

complain of want of health. We are all equally obliged to have recourse to resignation : one prays for me, another for you, and all are wishing better health to their tormented neighbours. My whitloe has at length left me, but it was slow in taking leave ; my other complaints obstinately defend their posts, and I my patience ; but I will not tire yours : let us therefore talk of other matters.

The great *Servus Servorum*, is said to be within two or three days' journey of us ; and our Emperor, who from an obstinate complaint in his eyes, is obliged to keep his room, would otherwise go to meet him. Heaven send, for the sake of the Christian world, that this unexpected visit may be prosperous ! The Petronian chest, which as usual, illustrates the generosity of my dear Gemello, will oblige me to practise a difficult and importunate moderation in the use of its contents. But Signora Martinetz, who devoutly reverences you, will heartily supply my inability, and begins already to thank me for the enviable commission. She has happily set to music my oratorio entitled *Isacco Figura del Redentore* (Isaac type of the Redeemer). It was yesterday performed

in the theatre, for the second time: And notwithstanding the rigour of the season, and catarrhs of the fingers, it was not defrauded of its merited approbation. This sacred function was performed here for the benefit of the poor widows of musicians, raising by the profits a fund, in order to relieve them by pensions, at the decease of their husbands*.

Oh how many things I still want to say! But what is to be done when we can do nothing! I beg you, my dear Gemello, to act my part with due respect and proportion among the many persons in your neighbourhood, who honour me with their remembrance. The admirable *Carlucciello* is embraced with my whole heart, and the fraternal tenderness confirmed of his immutable Gemello.

Vienna, March 20, 1782,

This was the last letter written by Metastasio to his beloved friend Farinelli, and

* This plan was established in imitation of the original English Fund for the support of decayed musicians and their families, now called the Royal Society of Musicians, and still subsists. See *Account of the Commemoration of Handel*.

perhaps

perhaps the last use which he made of his pen ! For in less than a fortnight after, he was seized with a fever, which deprived him of life, and the world of one of its best inhabitants and brightest ornaments ! But the account of his last sickness and decease, which the accomplished Mademoiselle Martinetz sent to Farinelli immediately after the fatal event, describes the circumstances so amply, and with so much feeling and elegance, that we shall give it to the reader, as much in her own words as a faithful translation will allow,

TO THE CAVALIER FARINELLI,

THE loss of a mortal who honoured humanity, is felt by all ; but it is particularly calamitous to those who, like yourself and our family, were united to him by the strictest bonds of a long and sincere friendship. Indeed from the time of the immortal Metastasio's first arrival in Vienna, April 17th, 1730, he never quitted our house, nor ceased conferring benefits and acts of kindness on its inhabitants: it will therefore be unnecessary minutely to describe the affliction of my mind to you, Sir, whose sensibility of heart

heart and affection for your friend, are so well known. The stroke, however, came upon us too suddenly: as the vigour of his constitution, superior to the age of eighty-four, animated by a constant and equal vivacity and incomparable wit, were such as promised a longer continuance among us, notwithstanding the habitual hypochondriac affections with which he was frequently incommoded, but which did not, however, deprive him of the enjoyment of society, sleep, appetite, study, or other vital functions. In the evening of the first of April, his fatal malady began. Returning home from his constant visit to Count *Perlas*, he complained of a chilness, eat very little at supper, went to bed at his usual time of twelve o'clock. The next morning, at seven, he called for my elder brother, Giuseppe, and consulted him whether he had best rise and go to church, as he had intended, it being Easter Sunday; but was advised by him to remain in bed, as his pulse was very quick: an hour after, the fever increased to such a degree, that it deprived him of speech, and he remained oppressed by a heavy lethargic sleep, which continued during two days, with short intervals, in which he was only

able to take the medicines prescribed by Dr. Molinari, his physician. The fever diminished so much on the morning of the fifth day, that he became tranquil, spoke freely, conversed with some of his friends, who visited him, and was able, after dinner, to have the sacrament administered to him. You may imagine, Sir, what great consolation this afforded us; but our hopes were of short duration, for at night, the fever returned with such violence, that every day he became more lethargic, and baffled all the skill of the most able physicians, who met in consultation; so that on the 12th of April, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, he finally, without much agony, rendered his sublime spirit into the hands of the eternal Creator, in the presence of his confessor, having three hours before received the general absolution of the Apostolic Nuncio. Now, since every mortal must pay the tribute of humanity, it was some alleviation to our sorrows, for so great a loss, to reflect, that this illustrious man, after having with universal applause, employed his extraordinary talents in instructing and delighting mankind, and amply fulfilled all the duties of a true Christian, of an eminent writer, and
 acquired

acquired the indisputable title of the first poet of the age, should enjoy, at present, the worthy and everlasting meed of his severe rectitude, probity, integrity, and morals.

For the Bologna present, generously intended for me, you must content yourself, Sir, as yet with my sincere thanks: when it arrives here, I shall be more diffuse in my acknowledgments, and with my information of its safety, give due praise to its kind contents. In the mean time, accept the most sincere assurances of the reverence, esteem, and respectful consideration, with which I have the honour to be, &c,

Vienna, May 9, 1782.

His friend and adopted twin, CARLO BROSCI, commonly called FARINELLI, survived this event but a short time; the poet dying April 12th, 1782, and the musician September 22d, of the same year, having arrived at the great age of eighty-one.—Let not libertinism, indelicacy, or inhumanity, ridicule or degrade this most excellent and worthy personage, for the cruelty of avaricious parents during childhood! His talents
had

had effects upon his hearers beyond those of any musical performer in modern times(*d*): and it may be doubted, whether the most celebrated musicians of antiquity, Orpheus, Linus, or Amphion, however miraculous their powers over the heart of man, ever excited such splendid and solid munificence in their hearers (*e*). His extraordinary voice and almost supernatural powers of execution, have been so often celebrated in every part of Europe, that nothing need be added here to his *public* professional character; and in the course of this work, the numerous and impressive eulogies of so exquisite a moralist and judge of the human heart as Metastasio, must have exalted his *private* virtues and conduct through life, to an uncommon pitch of excellence. In my youth, during the keenness of curiosity, concerning the life of this portentous performer, I had accounts from the highest authority, of his modesty, humility, and benevolent propensities, during his splendid residence at Madrid, while in the meridian of royal favour, invested with

(*d*) See *Italian Mus. Tour*, and *Hist. of Mus.* vol. iv.

(*e*) The King of Spain, settled a pension on him for life, of 2000l. (many accounts say 3000l.) sterl. per ann. with honours, privileges, and presents innumerable.

wealth,

wealth, honours, and influence, sufficient to excite every species of envy, hatred, and malice, in all the orders of society. Yet so sound were his intellects, so sage and judicious his conduct, that he cannot so properly be said to have escaped the shafts of envy, as to have prevented their being shot at him. Of almost all other great singers, we hear of their intoxication by praise and prosperity, and of their caprice, insolence, and absurdities, at some time or other; but of *Farinelli*, superior to them all in talents, fame, and fortune, the records of folly among the *spoilt children* of Apollo, furnish no one disgraceful anecdote. It was not till after this most astonishing performer and worthy man had descended with dignity from the height of his former eminence, power, and royal favour, that I had the pleasure of contemplating his manners, and enjoying his conversation at Bologna; but I do not remember that I ever was more satisfied or less disappointed in approximating celebrity. Rousseau says of Philosophers, that "the only prejudice of which they cured him, on acquaintance, was the having thought them, at a distance, superior to other mortals." But *Farinelli*, instead of losing ground

ground in my favour by a close examination; considerably augmented my respect and admiration. With all the ease and grace of a man of the world of high rank, long accustomed to the practice of urbanity, he joined intelligence, information, frankness and candour. Farinelli's mind was *entire*, whatever mutilations its mansion may have suffered. If vice, rashness, imprudence, or any thing in which his own volition might be accused, had rendered him different from his fellow creatures, reproach and contempt would have been justly his due. But when it is considered, that ever since he became a free-agent, his whole life was not only innoxious, but exemplary, in the practice of all the social, friendly, benevolent, and amiable virtues; that with natural powers, and acquired talents for delighting others in the most innocent and exquisite manner, he never lost his equanimity in the midst of the highest and most inebriating prosperity and applause, but remained humble, modest, and steady in his duty, gratitude, friendships, and attachment to his family and country; it seems as if the involuntary loss of the most gross and common of all animal faculties, had been the
only

only degrading circumstance of his existence (f).

METASTASIO's death illustrated the principles and practice of his life. Pious and firm in the belief of the religion of his country, he courageously, in his last moments, relied on the promised propitiation of his Saviour; and on receiving the sacrament a very short time before he expired, exclaimed,

*T'offro il tuo proprio figlio,
Che già d'amore in pegno,
Racchiuso in picciol segno
Si volle a noi donar.*

*A lui rivolgi il ciglio,
Guarda chi t'offre; e poi*

(f) It is not easy to account, rationally, for the total silence of all Metastasio's biographers, on the subject of his long, constant, and ardent friendship for this extraordinary and worthy person; though a volume and half of his letters are addressed to him, they seem ashamed to mention his name. Signor Mattei, indeed, has once condescended to speak of a letter to the *Eunuch* Farrinelli*—Why this contempt? If the vulgar and jocosé chuse to shew superiority by their sarcastic attempts at wit, they must not be robbed of so obvious and tempting an opportunity; but that men who fancy themselves philosophers, and elevated above plebeian prejudices, should join in the cruel conspiracy, is a disgrace to wisdom and learning.

* *Memorie per servire alla vita di Metastasio.* p. 41.

*Lasci, Signor, se vuoi,
Lascia di perdonar (g).*

O Lord, permit me, now my race is run,
While hov'ring o'er the gaping grave,
To offer up to Thee, thy only Son
In sacrifice, my foul to save.

See whom I offer ; oh, behold him, Lord,
And for his sake my crimes excuse ;
O turn thine eyes, and then refuse t'afford
Thy mercy, if thou canst refuse.

Dr. Johnson, equally pious, and impressed with the deepest conviction of the mystery of the incarnation, had too little reliance on his own merits, to think himself deserving of salvation, through his redeemer. With all his native courage, instead of boldly meeting his dissolution, he would gladly have suffered the most excruciating terrestrial torments, to have postponed the event. During his last visit to his friend Dr. Taylor, in Derbyshire, about four months before his decease, he says, in a letter to me, "I struggle hard for life. I take physic, and take

(g) This prayer was not pronounced extempore, as may be seen in the tenth volume of the *Nice* edition of his works, where it constitutes (with a small difference) the last Stanza of his *Paraphrase on the Miserere*, or fifty-first psalm, a posthumous work.

air ; my friend's chariot is always ready. We have run this morning, twenty-four miles, and could run forty-eight more. *But who can run the race with death ?*"

Metaſtaſio was interred in the pariſh church of Saint Michael, in Vienna, the 14th of April. The funeral rites were performed with ſplendor, by his grateful heir, Signor Joſeph Martinetz, in deſpite of the poet's injunctions, who had forbidden all kind of pomp. The inheritance of Signor Martinetz conſiſted in a well-furniſhed habitation, a coach, horſes, a great quantity of princely preſents, a very ample and ſelect collection of books, with a capital of one hundred and thirty thouſand florins ; from which, however, were to be deducted, twenty thouſand for each of the executor's ſiſters, and three thouſand for each of his younger brothers.

The poet's attachment to the *Martinetz* family, was of long ſtanding. In the year 1730, on his arrival at Vienna, the firſt houſe in which he took up his reſidence, was that of Signor Nicolò *Martinetz*, maſter of the ceremonies to the Apoſtolic Nuncio in that city. The eldeſt ſon of this gentleman, whom he appointed his heir, was auſtic counſellor

cellor and first keeper of the Imperial library. Signora Marianna, his eldest daughter, educated under the poet's eye, and universally admired for her talents and accomplishments, particularly in music (as has already been related) not only as an excellent performer on the harpsichord, and an exquisite finger, but for her genius and abilities as a composer. She was an élève of the admirable Dr. Haydn, who resided three years under the same roof with Metastasio, during her musical studies. She had lessons in singing from the celebrated *Porpora*, who had many years before been the poet's own music-master. The productions of Mademoiselle Martinetz, were communicated to, and approved by the greatest masters of Italy, and her name is inscribed as a member of the Philharmonic academy in Bologna and Mantua.

Signor Saverio Mattei, one of the most useful of Metastasio's biographers, though he rather gives advice to others, with loose and indigested materials, than a regular life of the poet, says, that "whoever wishes to acquire an exact knowledge of his customs, manners, way of life, opinions of himself and others; of his precision in fulfilling his duties, of the changes in his fortune, his

application, and the different degrees of favour with which his several productions were at first received, their chronology, the influence they had on the taste of Italy, and on that of all Europe, with respect to the melodrama, or lyric stage, can only acquire such information by the perusal of his LETTERS."

The reader has now been presented with entire translations of the principal letters contained in the five volumes of his correspondence, published at Nice, in 1786, and extracts from the rest; and it seems as if these would establish his character as a benevolent, amiable, and virtuous man, as firmly as his dramatic works and miscellaneous pieces have enrolled him among great poets.

His letters (says the most ample and accurate of all his Italian biographers, the Abate *Cristini*, editor of the Nice edition of his works) "will do honour to all Italy, while they discover his most intimate attachments, his most secret thoughts, his favourite opinions, and the history of a man who was all heart and all virtue."

These letters, like his dramas, are written without preface or text: he plunges at once directly into the business, whatever
it

It is; and in the first line makes known the subject. He is as short and laconic as the matter will allow, without omitting a single circumstance necessary to be known; and with the most natural simplicity, beautifies whatever he describes or explains. He rises above the common style, without affectation or singularity, and has invented a new species of writing, free from extravagance, that renders the most trifling circumstance interesting which he has occasion to mention. He has political, theatrical, critical, philosophical, and encomiastic letters, and all are pleasant and seducing. His genius, says Signor Arteaga (*b*), “may be compared to the goddess Chloris of the Greeks, who in flying through the air, scattered roses wherever she went.” The same grace, facility, and elegance of style, appear in his *prose*, which have rendered his *poetry* so justly celebrated. Indeed, till I saw these letters, I used to think, that there was no Italian prose so easy to comprehend and construe, by young students in the language, as the dramas of Metastasio. But I am now con-

(*b*) *Revoluzioni del Theatre Musicale Italiano*. To. II. p. 92.

vinced, that, in point of *facility*, the prose of our author is to his own poetry, what the prose of others is to their verse.

What renders these letters infinitely more natural and satisfactory, is, that, like the *familiares* of Cicero, they were not written with the least view to publication ; as the reader must have observed by the lively complaints he makes to his correspondents, who, for the gratification of their own vanity, had betrayed his confidence. Indeed, what Metastasio says of the unlicensed publication of his private letters by booksellers and others, might be said by the ghost of Dr. Johnson, and would come perhaps with equal propriety from the living and the dead. In a letter to Signor Diodati, July 14, 1769, he asks, “ What right can men have to the possessions of others, without their consent ? Is all idea of *meum* and *tuum* annihilated ? These invaders must know, that every man says things in conversation and correspondence with friends, that he would not say to the whole world ; and that such remarks on persons and things as are inoffensive in private, become injuries when published.” And it is most certain, that there is no man, however candid and prudent, whose private opinions

and

and conversations would not give pain to, and draw on him the resentment of persons whom he would be sorry to offend.

Metastasio was an enemy to that pompous, verbose, and obscure style which prevailed in his country a few years ago; and was persuaded, that the first duty of a writer, whether in prose or verse, was to be understood.

“The style of Metastasio (says an Italian critic) never fails to please those who give way to their own feelings, more than persons of profound meditation; and I would rather be accused of partiality to him, whom I venerate and love, than ranked with cold philosophers and deep thinkers, whom I may respect, but cannot love.”

All Metastasio's biographers seem to agree in his being of obscure birth; and almost all allow of his father having been a common soldier, but with some education; as when he quitted the army, before he opened a kind of huckster's shop, he became a copyist or writer, probably for the lawyers. Our poet's origin was so long a mystery, that many wild stories of his first profession, have been circulated; some have bound him appren-

tice to a *Goldsmith*, others to a *Stone-cutter*. But whatever was his genealogy, it cannot have been so high as to be degraded, or so low as not to have been sufficiently exalted by such worth and talents, to rank with illustrious ancestry. A worthy nobleman of our country, as respectable for literary abilities as titled dignity, has said, "I had rather be the first peer of my race, than the hundredth (*i*)."⁽ⁱ⁾ High birth most assuredly does not imply or preclude genius. The soul may be elevated by education and example ; but even these cannot fertilize a barren soil. The gifts of nature are common to every class of human beings. How many great talents have been brought to light by mere accident ! How many have burst out, in spite of parental discouragement and opposition ! The great musician, Handel, was intended for the law ; and our ingenious countryman, Dr. Arne, served a clerkship to an attorney. We know not very well for what employment Shakespeare was educated ; probably not for

(*i*) Description of the collection of pictures at *Houghton-Hall*, Norfolk, in 1743.

poetry,

poetry, or a learned profession. Pascal's genius discovered itself very early. Without genius, all the education and example of a great father, such as Cicero, could not make a great son. The melancholy and beautiful reflection of Gray,

“ Full many a rose is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air,”

is true, with respect to natural intellects, in poverty and obscurity, being thrown away upon the world ; yet, perhaps, “ whatever is, is right,” at last : there must be “ hewers of wood and drawers of water.”——A nation of philosophers, poets, painters, or musicians, without agriculture, useful handicraftsmen, and labourers, would be starved to death, or extirpated by wild beasts. There is, perhaps at present, a sufficient proportion in every state of Europe, of scientific and learned men, as well as of elegant artists ; and *equality* of any one kind in a state of society, though all were to be Lockes, Newtons, Bacons, or Boyles, seems not only physically and morally impracticable, but the very attempt appears pregnant with mischief, misery, and ruin to all.

Metastasio,

Metastasio, notwithstanding the indigence of his parents, fortunately received an excellent education from his adopted father, Gravina; which cherished and expanded the natural qualities of his good heart, and sound intellects (*k*). He was learned without pedantry, pious without cant or sect; breathing the true spirit of Christianity, without fanaticism or bigotry; and practising its benign precepts of morality, so favourable to the tranquillity and happiness of mankind.

The emperor, Charles VI, found in Metastasio, a man who encouraged and confirmed his love of virtue, decorum, and propriety; and Metastasio found in his patron, a prince susceptible of receiving favourably his recommendations of the moral and social, as well as heroic virtues. Indeed the poet and patron seem to have been made for each other.

Metastasio delighted in virtue so much, that when he delineates estimable characters, he refines upon the good qualities which history or tradition has assigned them; and

(*k*) The Abate Cristini, says, "Gravina, not only had him instructed in the civil law, but in the true spirit of religion, the government of the passions, disinterestedness, love of honest-fame, humility, modesty, probity, and the practice of every sublime virtue."

by his exquisite and transparent colours, gives to his pictures the utmost degree of perfection. Indeed his virtuous characters are more divine than human; but they are rendered so amiable and worthy of imitation, that they excite a wish in the reader or hearer to copy, or at least encourage and venerate such excellence. A true poet, says Horace (1), unites the sweetness of verse with the utility of his precepts: and no author has penetrated so far into the refinements of the art, as Metastasio. His heart was a copious and durable fountain of deep morality; the purest harmony flows from the same source; and these running together, partake of the quality of each other, emanating by turns both vigour and sweetness. Virtue cannot appear in a more pleasing and alluring garb to humanity. His heroes, it has been said, start at the sight of death, because they are human; but they advance, because they are virtuous.

Few writers have been fortunate enough to enjoy the favour of the public so completely during their lives, as Metastasio. But this felicity is not to be more ascribed, perhaps, to the excellence of his writings, than to

(1) *Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci.*

his

his modesty, candour, and determination neither to give nor take offence by censuring the productions of others, or resenting the censures of his own. He seems to have seen with due horror, the effects of literary war on the combatants (*m*).

His whole life appears to have been of that even tenour, which nothing but great accidents or public calamities could disturb. His veneration and gratitude for his patroness, the Empress Queen, seem, during the last years of his life, to have been the strongest passions to which he gave admission in his breast. When unfortunate in war, or on account of the sickness or death of any of her family, he was as much agitated, as any of her most faithful and best subjects. But when her own life was endangered by disease, his equanimity and philosophy totally left him. Then yielding to the natural sensibility and tenderness of a heart, neither chilled by apathy, nor petrified by stoicism, he became a common man; not too stubborn for affliction, or too proud and obdurate for the impressions of calamity. The sickness of his brother, and death of the

(*m*) See his letter of March, 1779, to the Abate Galfò.

Countess d'Althan, are likewise illustrations of this occasional sensibility. And if the well-known precept of his favourite poet is right, a man possessed of such irresistible pathetic powers over others, must have felt sensibly and painfully himself (*n*).

That celebrity which he enjoyed so indisputably during life, was not diminished by his decease; his works are still in every hand: the philosopher, the courtier, the bigot, the man of the world, austere and gallant females, all equally read them, and all find them equally beautiful. His moral maxims are daily cited, and his productions are become the code of lovers. The setting and singing his verses, have rendered Pergolesi, Venci, Jomelli, Sacchini, and Farinelli, Caffarelli, Pacchierotti, and Marchesi, as celebrated in all parts of Europe, as Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. Had his dramas been regular tragedies, written for declamation, without music, perhaps we should never have heard of them in England; but music being an universal language throughout Europe, they are certainly obliged to

(*n*) *Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.*

the

the composer and singer for a great part of their fame, at least out of Italy, notwithstanding the complaints of Metastasio himself, and the admirers of tragedy who are inimical to music, that they have been injured by composers and performers. Particular operas, and perhaps, at some time or other, all his dramas may have fallen into the hands of composers without genius, and singers without talents ; but upon the whole, excellently written as are Metastasio's dramas, and exquisite as is the Italian language, it must be owned, that music has been the vehicle in which the operas of Metastasio have travelled into foreign countries. Cato, Regulus, Themistocles, Artaxerxes, Olimpiade, and Demosonte, are allowed to breathe a true tragic spirit, even through the effeminate languor of lengthened tones, and long divisions ; but it is in the perusal, perhaps, not the vocal performance, that the force and beauty of Metastasio's dramatic scenes, have been discovered out of Italy. When an air has been encored, it has not been for the beauty of the poetry, but the composition or performance of that air. It must be allowed, however, without the least deduction, that Metastasio's genius, good taste,

taste, and sound judgment, first achieved the difficult task of rendering so wild and incongruous a compound of seemingly heterogeneous ingredients and absurdities, a rational entertainment.

Whether the subjects he chose for his dramas or fugitive pieces were sacred or secular, historical or mythological, they are treated with equal purity and delicacy. Dr. Johnson's high character of Richardson, as a *moral writer in prose*, is not more his due, than Metastasio's among *moral poets*. Though love could not be excluded from his secular dramas, it is of that refined and delicate sort which will mend and purify, not corrupt and deprave the heart. Decorum, probity, innocence, and good-faith, were equally inviolate in his actions and writings. And his constant wish seems to have been through life, to inspire in mankind, a love of virtue, and detestation of vice.

Even the church has defended his morality. The ci-devant Jesuit, father CORDARO, in his Eloge of our poet, says, "I well know, that Metastasio has been accused by some of having brought the passion of love too forward in his dramas, at the risk of seducing
and

and enervating the heart and virtue of the hearers. How shall we defend him from this charge? He would certainly have done better if he could have confined himself to the love of glory, and of our country, in displaying the virtues of valour, fidelity, and constancy, without meddling with the follies of lovers. But there are certain noble affections, concerning which the vulgar have but little knowledge, and less taste. On the contrary, every one understands love; and without that seasoning, every representation, at present, seems insipid. It is the predominate passion of the times. He was perhaps necessitated to comply with it; but with what precaution and reserve! Has an unchaste word ever escaped him? Or an idea that is not strictly within the limits of the most perfect delicacy? This may be said of his secular dramas taken from profane story; but his sacred dramas are not only exempt from blame with respect to the passion of love, but sufficiently pure in morals and doctrine, to serve as correctives to whatever the most morose critics may object to his productions for the stage."

The four critic, *Boileau*, disputes not the theatrical dominion of love;

—L'Amour

—L'Amour fertile en tendres sentimens

S'empare du theatre—

De cette passion le sensible peinture

Est pour aller au cœur la route la plus sûre.

Art. Poet. Chant. III. v. 93.

Lord of the manor, love has seiz'd the stage,

There to display his joy, his grief and rage ;

Though other passions may attention find,

'Tis that alone, which int'rests all mankind.

If the world could go on without love,
the playful character which our poet makes
the urchin give of himself, would fright
timid and sober folks from having any thing
to say to him.

—D'ogni costume,

Bella diva; io son capace :

Son modesto, e sono audace,

So parlare, e so tacer.

Serbo fede; uso l'inganno :

Son pietoso; e son tiranno ;

E m'adatto al mio talento

Al tormento, ed al piacer (o).

I've ev'ry virtue, ev'ry vice;

Now hot as fire; now cold as ice ;

Am sometimes modest, sometimes bold,

Loquacious now, now silence hold.

Both truth and falsehood have their turn;

I'm tender swain, or tyrant stern ;

And can, as best my measures suit,

Give rapture sweet, or pain acute.

(5) La pace fra la virtù, e la Bellezza.

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x

Metastasio's

Metaſtaſio's meaſures, in the ſongs with which he terminates the ſcenes of his dramas, are ſo ſweet and varied, that they have often ſuggeſted to muſical compoſers, by the mere peruſal, melodies of every kind.

It has been doubted by ſome eminent ſcholars of our country (unacquainted; perhaps, with his adoption and education by Gravina) whether Metaſtaſio was able to read the Greek tragic poets in the original. This ſcepticiſm concerning the extent of the Poet's learning, ſeems to have ariſen from the little uſe that he has been found to make of the ancient fathers of the Drama in his own works, either by directly copying them, or by imitations; but this he might eaſily have done, by the help of Pere Brumoy, and others, from tranſlation. Whoever has read with attention his *Abstract of Aristotle's Art of Poetry*, and remarks on the doctrines it contains, will not only find it impoſſible to doubt of his acquaintance with the Greek language and theatre, but clearly ſee his reaſons for not implicitly adopting their practice, or fervilely copying their ſentiments. That he has highly taſted and revered the great Grecian models in every ſpecies of literature, and frequently tinctured

tured his writings with infusions from their inestimable productions, has been locally indicated by some of his learned countrymen, who have been most severe upon the few imperfections which they could discover in his works.

It has been said by Arteaga (*p*), that no one has so happily adapted the Greek strings to the Italian lyre, as Metastasio; he having seized the very soul of the Greek poets more successfully than any of his predecessors in Italy, not even excepting *Chiabrera*, who was certainly a great man, but who, in imitating the ancients, wanted the true philosophical spirit (*q*).

It is not sufficient (continues Arteaga) for an author to call an irregular ode Pindaric, because it is divided into *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Epode*, if devoid of the true Pindaric genius, the Greek *costume* and character, and if constructed in measures wholly untuneable, forgetting that music and poetry were inseparable in ancient Greece. It is the same

(*p*) *Ubi supra*, Vol. II. p. 84.

(*q*) Chiabrera, born at Savona in 1552, is said by Apostolo Zeno to approach Pindar in dignity, and Anacreon in sweetness. *Nella dignità si accosta a Pindaro, nella dolcezza ad Anacreonte*. Bibl. dell' Eloquenza Ital. di Fontanini con le Annotazioni d'Apost. Zeno.

with most of those who fancy they resemble Anacreon, when their ideas seem to spring from his gay system. But how different from the productions of these pretenders is the golden hymn of Metastasio in the Olympiade: In which, whoever is possessed of a soul for poetry, and free from pedantry, will recognize the true Grecian spirit.

Del forte Licida, &c.

The genius of the famed celebrator of Bathyllus appears with equal felicity in the hymn which Achilles sings in the opera of that name:

Se un' Alma annodi, &c.

In which our Poet's muse resembles the dove of Venus, quenching his thirst from the cup of Anacreon.

Some of his dramas, however, were certainly written under restraints and disadvantages at the court of Vienna. He was not only obliged to ride post to Parnassus, occasionally, upon very short notice, but circumscribed to very narrow limits in other respects; particularly in writing for the performance of the Arch-dutcheffes. At such times he was obliged to relinquish the established rules and prejudices of the theatre; even the number of personages was prescribed,

scribed, as well as their habits, figure, age, and manners. A *Stock piece*, fit for general use, is a jack-boot, that will fit any leg; Metastasio, however, was obliged to cut out to one measure, and finish to a particular last. But of these difficulties, we have his own account in various letters.

The ten first years of his residence at Vienna, will determine the point of elevation which his glory attained. He regarded *Attilio Regolo* as his best OPERA, *Betulia Liberata* as his best ORATORIO, and ARTASERSE as the most FORTUNATE of his dramas: for however set or sung, it was always successful.

It was an intelligent observation of the late accomplished musician *Abel*, that the genius of Emanuel Bach would have been more expanded and of more general use, if, instead of being confined to the Hans town, of Hambro' without a rival, he had resided in a great capital, such as Paris, Naples, or London, where he would have been stimulated to diligence and exertion by competitors, and obliged to study and respect the public taste. But Metastasio, confined to the Imperial theatre at Vienna, without an opponent, or fear of either public caprice or private cabal, though the performers were

not always of the first class, or his auditors such formidable critics as those he would have had to encounter in Italy, was so sure of success in the style which he had formed early in life, that he had no occasion to try experiments in order to excite curiosity, or awaken attention in an audience less able to judge of the poetry than the music, and not allowed to be severe, if displeased with their entertainment.

His monotonous residence at Vienna, seemed perfectly to suit with his natural love of order and tranquillity. Though late in life, when he felt "the cold gradations of decay," he was sometimes a little hurried and oppressed by the number of Imperial commands to write, yet he was not among the celebrated authors *qui ploravere suis non respondera favorem Speratum meritis*. Many instances have already been given of the favour and sense of his worth, manifested by his patrons; but more still remain, which equally deserve to be recorded.

When he had finished his opera intitled *Il Re Pastore*, & *l'Eroe Cinese*, the Empress Queen sent him a gold candlestick, with a green shade to protect his eyes from too great a glare of light, which condescending care

of

of his *figbt*, the poet regarded as infinitely more valuable than the gift itself.

His drama of *Athenais* procured him from his Imperial patroness the following note, which will always be an honourable monument to literature.

“In this opera, and in the extreme alacrity with which it was written, I find the great Metastasio full of all the fire and force of his extraordinary genius. And it pleases me the more, as it assures me of the good state of the health of a man who has no equal, and of whom I have always regarded the possession as one of the happiest circumstances of my life. This opera has enabled me to pass an hour in the most delightful manner, and I am extremely grateful for it.”

Upon another occasion (the rapid production of a *Complimento*, or a short Ode for Music, to be performed by Arch-dutcheffes on a birth-day) the Empress Queen wrote him the following flattering note, in French:

“*La promptitude de la surprise m'est d'autant plus agréable, que je vois mon ancien Maître (r) parfaitement conservé, qui fait la*

(r) The Empress Queen had received from Metastasio her last instructions in the Italian language.

*gloire de notre siècle, Et plus encore de ceux
à qui il s'est voué.* "MARIE THERÈSE."

All his biographers mention the offer of the dignity of COUNT, BARON, and Counsellor of the Court, from the Emperor Charles VI, after he had written *Achille in Sciro*; and similar honours by the Empress Queen, of which he declined the acceptance.

He seems, systematically, to have declined all honorary distinctions which might excite envy, detraction, and obloquy, in his peers, and fill his own mind with humiliating thoughts and mortifying reflections. When the coronation of the *Improvisatrice*, CORILLA, was in meditation at Rome, the Empress Queen, justly supposing that the Honour of the laurel crown, which Petrarca had not disdained to accept, could only belong to Metastasio, sent Baron Hagen to desire the Poet to accept of it; but he, with equal firmness and humility, declined the offer.

Before we proceed to speak of his numerous productions, it may be necessary to observe, that the French, ever aspiring at universal empire, not only in territorial dominion, but arts, sciences, literature, and every

every species of ingenuity, deny Metastasio all claim to *invention*, and class him only among *imitators* of the tragic poets of France. He certainly did not invent the stories and names of his heroes and heroines, which are generally the most grand and illustrious of ancient history, and such as had not only been previously treated by writers of other countries, but of his own; but has he stolen or imitated the thoughts and conduct of his predecessors? Has he, like Quinault, confined himself to ancient mythology for his subjects, or always to the same heroes, or chosen the same virtues and vices to display, as Corneille and Racine? Even the names of many of his pieces are not to be found in the works of these tragedians. Why then deny him the merit of invention, in treating subjects that have never been brought on the French stage; in delineating such characters, painting such situations, and colouring passions with such new, sublime, and touching sentiments, as are not to be found in the dramas of any other writer, ancient or modern? Then let it be remembered, in writing for modern music, how circumscribed and limited he must have been in the length, measures, and
diction

diction of his dramas ; in drawing to a kind of epigrammatic focus the business and sentiments of a whole scene, in the *Air* by which it is terminated, and to which it is a kind of epilogue. Who is able to read the melodramas of his predecessors, in Italy, or elsewhere ? But, though so truly lyric, and happily simplified and polished for musical expression, there are few tragedies written for declamation in any other language which please and interest more in the perusal, without music, than the Operas of Metastasio. And yet he is denied the merit of *originality* ! His simplicity, elegance, grace, propriety, and even morality, are original *on the stage*.

Thus far we have only considered Metastasio as a dramatic writer ; but he would have merited a very distinguished place among the lyric and miscellaneous poets of his country, if he had only produced his *Cantatas*, *Canzonets*, and fugitive pieces, such as *La Libertà*, *La Partenza*, *La Primavera*, which, perhaps, have never been equalled in his own or any other modern language.

As the sedentary, and usually, uniform, life of a man of letters, seldom affords a greater variety of incident than that of a

Monk,

Monk, the chronology, plan, and reception of their most interesting productions, are, perhaps, the most useful materials which their biographers can boast. We have these resources still in store; and these Memoirs, which, with little deduction, may be said, from the great portion of each volume which is occupied by the poet's own letters, to be written by Himself, shall be terminated with an ample list of his writings, classed under different heads, beginning with his *Operas*, the great pillars of his fame.

Metafasio, in one of his letters to a friend, who tried to persuade him to continue to write, tells his correspondent, that, "After having treated almost all the modifications of the human heart, the intense application necessary for the invention and texture of a dramatic composition, became to him an exceeding hard labour (s)." In the following catalogue of his dramatic works, will be indicated the *moral object* which the poet had chiefly in view, while he was writing each piece; in which he has not only administered cathartics to the irregular passions, according to Aristotle, but anodynes to virtue.

(s) See Vol. II. Letter VII, to Saverio Mattei, p. 393.

A
CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

METASTASIO'S SECULAR DRAMAS, OR
OPERAS,SPECIFYING THE TIME, AND PLACE, WHERE THEY
WERE FIRST PERFORMED, BY WHOM SET TO MUSIC,
AND THE MORAL OBJECT OF EACH.

I. DIDONE ABBANDONATA, was written and first represented at Naples, 1724. Set to music by *Sarro*. The dire effects of the inconsiderate passion of *love*, and the consequent rage of *disappointment* and *despair*, are displayed in this drama.

II. SIROE. First performed at Venice, 1726. Set by *Leonardo Vinci*. A parent's *blind partiality* for one unworthy son, and ill-treatment of another, whose *filial duty* and *affection* are proof against disgrace and suffering, are the vice and virtue chiefly displayed in this opera.

III. CATONE IN UTICA. Rome, 1728. Set by *Vinci*. In this piece, no one need be told that it's here's love for his country, and the freedom

freedom of its inhabitants, are painted under the well-known virtue of *Cato*, called *Patriotism*.

- IV. EZIO, or ÆTIUS. Set by *Porpora* for Rome, 1729. *Valour* and *Fidelity* to the hero's sovereign, in spite of ill-treatment, are the principal virtues of the Protagonistes in this drama.
- V. SEMIRAMIDE RICONOSCIUTA, 1729. Set by *Porpora*, for Rome. In this drama *Vice is detected*, but not punished; and no extraordinary efforts of virtue have been exerted by the successful characters. However, it is allowed by the severest critics, that the beauties of the poetry are sufficient to compensate for the defects of the fable; and that any one, except *Metastasio*, who has ever written for the lyric stage, would be glad to have been its author.
- VI. ALESSANDRO NELL' INDIE, 1730. Set by *Vinci* for the Roman theatre. The *magnanimous Generosity* and *Clemency* of Alexander the Great, are the most prominent virtues in this drama; which, though it has ever been a favourite of the public, is not allowed by Italian critics to rank with the author's productions of the highest class. The words of the songs, however, are in such favour with Italian composers, that they have them by heart, and frequently choose one of them, occasionally, for a detached air, to display the

the abilities of a concert finger, without any dramatic connection.

VII. ARTASERSE. Set for Rome by *Vinci*, and for Venice by *Haffe*, 1730. The principal virtues inculcated in this celebrated drama, are the *filial duty* and *affection* of Arbaces.

VIII. ADRIANO IN SIRIA. The *triumph* of the Emperor Adrian, *over the passion of love*, is the moral lesson of this drama, the first which the author produced at Vienna, for his Imperial patron, the Emperor Charles VI. 1731. It was set by *Caldara*, of Venice.

IX. ISSIPILE. Vienna, 1732. Set by *Conti*. The virtue that is chiefly displayed in this affecting drama, is *filial affection*: the heroine risking her own life, and that of her lover, to preserve her father.

X. DEMETRIO. First performed at the Imperial theatre in Vienna, 1732, to the music of *Caldara*. The moral inculcated is *the sacrifice of love to duty*.

XI. OLIMPIADE. Set by *Caldara* for the Imperial court, 1733. The subject of the fable turns upon a most heroic *sacrifice to friendship and gratitude*. The songs, in general, of this admirable drama, are among the most poetical and happy of *Metastasio's* lyric compositions.

XII. DEMOFOONTE. First performed at Vienna, 1733, to the music of *Caldara*. In this most interesting and affecting drama, which, for the

the sublimity of the thoughts, the energy and force of expression, and the grace and elegance of the language, may be regarded as the most perfect of Metastasio's productions, *marital affection* is proof against the most humiliating disgrace and terrific danger.

XII. LA CLEMENZA DI TITO. *Clemency*, the subject of this drama, was rooted in the heart of Metastasio; and the luxuriance with which it sprung up and flourished, was never more manifest, than in the *benignity* with which he has embellished the character of Titus, and established his right to the title of *deliciæ humani generis*. This admirable lesson for his Imperial patron, was first performed at the court theatre in Vienna, 1734, to the music of *Caldara*.

XIV. ACHILLE IN SCIRO. Written at Vienna in 1736, for the marriage of the Arch-duchess Maria Theresa with the Duke of Lorrain, and set by *Caldara*. *The conquest of glory over love* is the principal moral basis of the piece. The character of the young Achilles in this drama is the *Hercules infans* strangling the serpents in the cradle. It has been said by an Italian critic (†), that if Metastasio had written no other drama than this, it would have placed him in the high rank which he so deservedly attained.

(†) The Abate Colomes.

LV. CIPRO RICONOSCIUTO. Vienna, 1736. Set by *Antonio Caldara*. In this drama, a *fond and distressed mother* is the most interesting agent in almost every scene: where she is by turns anxious, terrified, enraged, and enraptured. The subject of this piece is manifestly the same as the *Merope* of *Maffei*, *Voltaire*, *Aaron Hill*, and the tragic writers of all ages and countries, from the time of *Euripides*.

XVI. THEMISTOCLES. Written for the court of Vienna, 1736, set by *Caldara*. This opera abounds with more noble sentiments, moral maxims, and patriotic effusions, than any one of *Metastasio's* works. There is not, perhaps, in the annals of mankind, a more respectable and interesting character than that of *Themistocles*. And this drama, of which he is the *Protagonistes*, has been lately pronounced in Italy (*) worthy of the best age of Athens, the happy, but ungrateful mother of this hero.

XVII. ZENOBIA, Vienna, 1740. Set by *Prester*. This is ranked among *Metastasio's* best dramatic productions. In *Zenobia's* character, to the virtue of *filial obedience*, is added an extraordinary portion of *conju-*

(*) *Osservazioni di varij letterati sopra i drammi dell'abate Metastasio.* Tomo II. p. 193. In Nizza, 1785.

gal fidelity to a husband whom her father's situation and entreaties obliged her to marry, though long passionately attached to a fond and worthy lover of her own and her parent's choice.

XVIII. ATTILIO REGULO. Written 1740, for Vienna, but not performed till 1750; when it was first set by *Hasse*, for the court of Dresden. It was an enterprize of great difficulty to support the character of *patriotism* in three different dramas, without monotony of sentiments, or deficiency of interest in the plot or personages. But the poet has so contrived to difference these patriots, as to avoid copying himself. The character of *Cato* is severe and inflexible; of *Themistocles*, grand, tender, and resolute; and of *Regulus*, magnanimous, rigid; just and almost divine.

XIX. ANTIGONO. Written for the court of Dresden, and set by *Hasse*, 1744. The social virtues of *parental generosity*, *filial duty*, *affection*, and *obedience*, *friendship*, and *fidelity*, are all in action, and put to the test in this drama.

XX. IPERMESTRA. Vienna, 1744. Set by *Hasse*. *Conjugal affection* is here manifested, at the imminent risk of life, by the heroine of the drama.

XXI. IL RE PASTORE. Vienna, 1751. Written for ladies of the Imperial Court, by whom

it was first performed to the compositions of Signor *Bonno*. *Humility, moderation, and contentment*, are beautifully illustrated, and rendered desirable, in the sentiments of the Shepherd King. When it is remembered that this drama was written expressly for great personages to perform in the presence of their Imperial Majesties, invested with absolute power, the bold and vigorous sentiments on the duty of sovereigns, which the Poet ventured to put into the mouth of one of the characters, do equal honour to his Imperial patrons, who could listen to them with pleasure, and to the Laureat who had the courage to preach such doctrine in a court.

XXII. L'ÉROE CHINOISE. Represented for the first time by persons of distinction in the Imperial garden at Schonbrunn, 1752, to the music of *Bonno*. The heroic *loyalty* and *fidelity* of the principal personage in the piece, are such as must appear unnatural and excessive to Europeans unacquainted with the Chinese veneration for their princes and fathers of families.

XXIII. NITTETI. Written for the Court of Madrid, 1756. Set by *Conforti*. The heroism in this drama is wholly female. The character of *Beroe* is the triumph of Virtue, exhibiting an admirable example of generosity

rosity and fortitude in a female that is at once young, beautiful, full of sensibility, and in love! Though this is not one of Metastasio's best compositions; yet the delicacy of sentiment and expression of some of the songs, frequently equal those of his most celebrated productions.

XXIV. IL TRIONFO DI CLELIA. Vienna, 1762.

Set by *Haffs*. *Patriotic enthusiasm* is the prominent feature in the opera of *Clelia*: a heroine neither coarse nor masculine. There are not, indeed, in this drama, those tender and touching strokes, those sentimental and elegant airs, and happy similes, which occur in most of his other theatrical pieces; but, if we recollect the Roman *costume* at the early periods of conquest, we shall find *la feroce vertu republicaine* admirably painted.

XXV. ROMOLO ED ERSILIA. Written at Vienna,

1765, for the marriage of the Arch-duke Leopold, and set by *Haffs*. This drama, which has never been popular, is, however, not without infinite merit in its simplicity of plot and delicacy of sentiment. The hero determines to wave the exercise of power, in hopes of obtaining by affection what he could command as a conqueror; the heroine is ready to sacrifice every inclination and hope of felicity, rather than rebel against

the will of her father, and the rigid laws of her country.

XXVI. IL RUGGIERO, OVVERO L'EROICO GRATITUDINE. Written at Vienna, for the nuptials of the Arch-duke Ferdinand with the Princess of Modena; and first performed at Milan, 1771, to music composed by *Hasse*. This was the last production of the great Poet, and excellent Musician; who had both exceeded their 70th year. The *heroic gratitude* of *Ruggiero* towards a rival to his fame and love, who had generously saved his life and rescued him from prison, is the characteristic virtue of this drama. Superficial young critics have pretended to discover the coldness and sterility of old age in the words and music of this opera; but however inferior to the more early productions of these illustrious authors, more intelligent and candid judges discovered scene and sentiments in the poetry, and elegance and propriety in the music, of which, at the time they were produced, none but *Metastasio* and *Hasse* could have been the authors.

THE

THE present Work having been undertaken as a kind of supplement to the *General History of Music*, it is hoped that the musical reader will not be offended if a few reflections are added here concerning each class of Metastasio's poetical productions for music. And first, of the *OPERA*, or *Secular Musical Drama*, in the state to which it was brought by our Lyric Poet.

The most judicious critics of Italy, where the Melodrama is best understood, after analysing the dramas of this author, and witnessing the failure of his successors, are of opinion, that "good taste in theatrical representations in music was born and died with Metastasio." All the great Tragic Poets of Greece preceded the formation of the rules of the art by Aristotle. Rules are now drawn from the dramatic works of Metastasio, which can never be fulfilled but by imitation. And as poetry is derived from soul and sentiment, not from line and rule, and genius is an enemy to restraint and violence, whoever thinks it necessary to

imitate Metastasio, even with equal genius, must be in trammels. And yet, if *he* is quite right, what can new candidates for dramatic fame, in writing for music, do better than to imitate him? It is impossible to discover new, easy, and pleasant roads, in a country which he has so often intersected, without pursuing, or at least crossing, some of his paths.

Apostolo Zeno seems to have been the Eschylus, and Metastasio the Sophocles and Euripides of the modern Melodrama. What preceded and is subsequent to them, appears equally to partake of the wildness and weakness of their predecessors and successors in Greece and Italy.

When any *style* of poetry or music is brought to perfection, little is left to be done for a long while, but to imitate and vary the thoughts and passages of that style. Milton's epic, Pope's satirical and epistolary style, in poetry, and Pergolesi's in music, must be worn out and nearly forgotten, perhaps, before new styles can be formed or favoured. Handel left nothing new to be done in *his* style of composition. Imitations are ever timid and feeble. What has been happily accomplished without rules or model,

del, cannot be achieved with the same energy, enthusiasm, and effect, by a *Receipt*: All great originals, such as Homer, Pindar, and Shakspeare, either preceded, or despised rules.

Novelty is wanting at present, both to Poetry and Music; but the time, or at least the daring and inventive genius, is not yet arrived for either. The Oratorios of Handel, sublime as are the chorusses and many of the songs, from having been so often heard, have tired the public ear, and yet no other attempts are listened to with patience. It is so with opera airs and playhouse songs: eternal imitation and repetition of what we have heard a thousand and a thousand times, renders our musical theatres a confused and ill-bred *conversazione*, more than an interesting performance of poetry and music (x).

Signor Saverio Mattei, in his dissertation *on the Philosophy of Music* (y), has made

(x) This complaint is confined to the generality of *Vocal Music*. The new Symphonies of HAYDN preclude all conversation, by their never-failing novelty, and the inexhaustible fertility of his invention. Almost all other music is little more than a *Cento*, which can never grapple with attention.

(y) *SALMI*, Tomo V.

many just reflections on the declension of the musical drama in Italy, which are not totally inapplicable elsewhere. He says, that “ every species of voice, from the ambition of soaring with the lark, and mounting to sublimity, has lost its true quality and character. The *Bass* tries to rival the Tenor, the *Tenor* the Counter-tenor, the *Counter-tenor* the Soprano, and the *Soprano* the Flageolet, or bird-pipe.

The improvements in musical instruments and instrumental composition have been the ruin of vocal music. Instruments, for want of vocal expression, multiply notes and long divisions. But it degrades a singer to run races with hautbois, flutes, and fiddles. Let instrumental performers shew their power of hand, and the genius of their several instruments; but let not the human voice quit the sentiments and expressions of humanity, and the passions that belong to its nature: let instruments imitate birds and beasts; but let not the human voice imitate the tricks and tones of instruments, to which it should serve as a model: let its inflections be purely *vocal*, and such as will please, not disgrace, humanity.

Another observation of Signor Mattei,
 3 seems

seems naturally to account for the rapid decline of the Opera, as far as concerns Poetry and Music. "At present," says this judicious Critic, "the emoluments of the principal persons employed in a musical drama are settled in a direct contrary ratio to what they ought to be. At Naples, the manager of the Opera assigns to the first Dancer 2000 sequins; to the first Singer 1000; to the Composer 200; and to the Poet 50; whereas the whole arrangement should be reversed: the highest salary should be given to the Poet; the second to the Composer; the third to the Singer; and the fourth to the Dancer." And perhaps, if these salaries were settled, like an English county election, by public suffrage, this would be the general opinion. As it is, says Signor Mattei, "Opera talents are proportioned to the pay: the dancer is better than the singer, the performance of the singer better than the intrinsic merit of the *score* or composition, and the worst of all is the poetry, stolen from Metastasio, and totally spoiled by the poetaster, who botches it together." From this state of things it must appear in vain to hope for a good Opera, or a reform in the established system.

Subjects of dignity, heroism, and great passions, are ruined in the Italian Opera, by the kind of voice which ever claims the principal part. If, then, the style of singing were a little simplified, and select *Tenor* voices, highly cultivated, were assigned the principal parts, the poetry would have its effect, as well as the music; and *Cato*, *Themistocles*, and *Regulus*, would appear with dignity and propriety, though they spoke in song (z). If the exquisite voices and refinements in singing of the *Evirati* cannot be dispensed with, let them be employed in female parts, as is constantly the case at Rome, and as, in our Shakspeare's time, was the case with all the female parts on our stage, which were performed by boys.

Italy, ever fertile in genius, cannot be in want of men of abilities equal to the difficult task of finding out a new path in an art thought to be already brought to perfection.

The present system of giving the principal man's part to a *Soprano* voice, must confine the Poet to love, tenderness, and effemi-

(z) There can be no doubt but that the little success and infrequency of the performance of these heroic dramas, were occasioned by the principal part being written for a *Tenor* voice.

nate characters and passions. At present, the Italians condescend to imitate the noise, machinery, and *Balets analogues* of France; and these often supply the place of good poetry as well as music. A *Spectacle*, however splendid, must fatigue the eye, if the mind has nothing to do.

It seems necessary here to take some notice of the mutual complaints of Metastasio himself, and his learned friend Mattei, of the neglect of Poetry and abuse of Execution on the Opera Stage.

It is natural and just that poets should wish to simplify *Dramatic Music*. But perhaps it would not be for the interest, even of the words, to strip it of all ornaments and opportunities of displaying a fine voice and superior vocal abilities. Some latitude may surely be given to the composer and performer in the airs, when it is considered that the whole business of the Drama, in carrying on the plot and developing characters in Metastasio's Operas, is transacted in the *Recitatives*, and that the airs are merely recapitulations of each scene, and illustrations of the principal incident or affection on which it is founded. I would willingly sacrifice all superfluous ornaments and science
in

in the composition of *Musical Dramas*, but of respect to the POETRY; but I cannot join in the contempt which lyric poets put upon instrumental music in general. Good fingering is infinitely more uncommon than good playing; and though the most pleasing power an instrument can possess, is that of imitating the voice, yet both stringed and wind instruments of the first class have their peculiar qualities both of expression and execution. The productions of Corelli, Geminiani, Handel, and Tartini, for violins, long gave lovers of music infinite delight, when well executed, without the assistance of the voice; and since their reign, the productions of Stamitz, Bach, Abel, Boccherini, Haydn, Vanhal, Pleyel, &c. have so much merit of composition, and effect in performance, that they not only make us forget our cares, but all the enchantments of vocal music.

SACRED DRAMAS,

OR,

ORATORIOS.

1. LA PASSIONE DI GIESU CRISTO. Written in 1730, at Rome, by order of the Emperor Charles VI. Set by *Caldara*, and performed in

in the Imperial Chapel at Vienna, in Passion-week.

II. SANT' ELENA AL CALVARIO. Written at Vienna for Passion-week, and set by *Caldara* for the Imperial Chapel, 1731.

III. LA MORTE D'ABEL. For the same place and occasion, 1732. Set by *Reutter*.

IV. GIUSEPPE RICONOSCIUTO. Set by *Porfio*, for ditto, 1733.

V. BETULIA LIBERATA. 1734. *Reutter*, for ditto.

VI. GIOAS RE DI GIUDA. 1735. Ditto.

VII. ISACCO FIGURA DEL REDENTORE. 1740. Ditto.

Besides the above seven Oratorios for the Imperial Chapel, he wrote a Sacred Drama, PER LA FESTIVATA DEL SANTO NATALE, at Rome, in 1727, for *Cardinal Ottoboni* (a), which was set by *Giovanni Costanza*, and performed in a theatre, with scenes, and in action (b).

Calfabigi (in the Preface to the Paris Edition of *Metastasio's Works*, 1755) in speaking of these Oratorios, says, that “ *Meta-*

(a) It is said, by some of *Metastasio's* biographers, that *Cardinal Ottoboni* was his god-father, and that the Poet received the name of *Pietro* in honour of this illustrious sponsor.

(b) In the *Nice* edition of these Oratorios, all the texts of Scripture are indicated in the notes.

fio,

fib, by adapting his beautiful poetry to sacred story, under the most severe laws of the Drama, has produced Tragedies as perfect as this kind of composition will allow." And Saverio Mattei, who is of the same opinion, and seems anxiously to wish for a theatre at Naples wholly appropriated to *Sacred Dramas*, during Lent, says, that "the Greeks went to a play as to a *spiritual exercise*, or as we go to a sermon." And it is well known from Livy's account, that the Romans, in times of public calamity, flew to the theatre; and that the first introduction of Dramas with Music was occasioned by the plague.

Mattei wishes the music of oratorios to be grave, learned, and sublime. "Young musicians (says he) are merely taught counterpoint; which is no more than *concordance* in grammar; but they know nothing of the *philosophical* or *poetical* part of music. Their whole knowledge is mechanical, and they are never out of the grammar. As to different styles of composition, they are seldom allowed to study any but that of their master. The vocal styles of Vinci, Pergolesi, Haffé, Jomelli, Cafaro, and Piccini, are all different, yet all good."

In

In establishing a *sacred tragic theatre*, Mattei not only wishes the inimitable oratorios of Metastasio to be new set by the greatest masters, without humouring the caprice of such singers as are only capable of singing in one style, or of executing a particular passage or trick, which must necessarily be introduced in every song they sing; but, above all, to have the poetry respected, and the precepts of *Joash*, *Joseph*, *Judith*, &c. heard with reverence. His plan extends to the works of the most solid and scientific composers of the last age; such as Leo, Haffé, and Jomelli, which he would have revived, and performed without changing a syllable or a note (c).

Besides his regular oratorios, in two parts, Metastasio wrote several sacred poems, which breathe great fervour of devotion (d).

ODE

(c) It does not appear that Signor Mattei wishes to have sacred dramas performed in *action*; that would be a revival of *Mysteries* and *Moralities*. Oratorios have long been performed in several churches at Rome every Sunday evening, in the still manner of HANDEL's Oratorios in England, but to a light and feeble music, and executed by an inferior band.

(d) Metastasio was very firm in his religious faith, and discouraged sceptical and light discussions of sacred subjects:

ODE SOPRA IL SANTISSIMO NATALE; or, Ode
for the birth of Christ.

PARAPHRASE ON THE MISERERE, or Fifty-first
Psalm.

HYMN TO SAINT JULIAN.

This last was written about the year 1751, for the Italian chapel at Vienna, where it still continues to be sung. In a letter to his brother Leopold, about this time, he expresses his own pious rapture at the unexpected commission which Pope Benedict XIV had given him to inform the poet of his Holiness's paternal and benevolent remembrance. And, finding that the *servus servorum* was much pleased with his hymn to St. Julian, he says, "It is hardly to be imagined what pleasure the people of Roman catholic states in Germany, have in such spiritual songs, when allowed to sing them in their own language; or the raptures which pious sentiments, clothed in majestic harmony, excite. But it is not an enterprize for every one to attempt. With the assistance of *Fomelli*, and better health, I should

jects: telling his friends, that, "for the peace of his conscience, he found religious mysteries more easy to believe than to investigate."

be

be tempted to venture in this sea; but these are only *pia desiderata* (c)."

OCCASIONAL DRAMAS

FOR

MUSIC AND THEATRIC REPRESENTATION,
OF ONE AND TWO ACTS ONLY.

LA GALATEA, ENDIMIONE, ANGELICA; Serenatas, written at Naples between the year 1721 and 1723, and set by *Porpora*. These were never meant for action, but to be performed in still life, like our oratorios.

GLI ORTI ESPEREDI, written for the Empress Elizabeth's birth-day, 1721.

L'ISOLA DISABITATA, written in 1752, for the court of Spain, set by *Bonna*.

FESTE TEATRALE,

OR

FESTAL DRAMAS FOR MUSIC.

LA CONTESSA DE'NUMI; or, Contention of the Gods, written at Rome, 1729, and set by

(c) His brother poet, our countryman, Mason, likewise writes divine hymns, and encourages metrical psalmody in our parish churches.

Vinci, for Cardinal Polignac, in celebration of the birth of the Dauphin, father of Louis XVI.

IL TEMPIO DELL'ETERNITA, written at Vienna, for the birth-day of the Empress Elizabeth, and set by *Fouchs*, 1731.

L'ASILO D'AMORE, written at Vienna, 1732, and set by *Caldara*; afterwards augmented, 1765, and new set by *Gafman*.

LE GRAZIE VENDICATE, "Defence of the Graces," written at Vienna, for the performance of the two Arch-dutcheffes, MARIA TERESA, and MARIANNA, with a Lady of the Imperial court, on the Empress Elizabeth's birth-day, 1735. Set by *Caldara*.

IL SOGNO DI SCIPIONE. "Scipio's Dream," written for the birth-day of the Emperor Charles VI, 1735. Set by *Predieri*.

IL PALLADIO CONSERVATO. Set by *Reutter*, 1735. Performed by two Arch-dutcheffes and another Lady.

LE CINESI. Written first for three Ladies only, at the Imperial court, 1735, and set by *Reutter*. But afterwards, with an additional character, it was performed by professed singers, at the Prince of *Saxon-Hilburghausen's*, in the presence of their Imperial majesties, Francis I, and Maria Theresa, 1752.

IL PARNASO ACCUSATO, E DIFESO. Set by *Reutter*. Vienna, 1738.

LA PACE FRA LA VIRTÙ, E LA BELLEZZA. For the

the birth-day of the Arch-dutcheſs MARIA
THERESA, 1738. Set by *Predieri*.

In this little drama, VENUS's ELOGE on Beauty
is admirable.

————— *Luce divina,*
Raggio del Cielo è la Bellezza, e rende
Celeſti anche gli oggetti in cui riſplende.
Queſta l'alma più tarde
Sollewa al ciel, come ſollewa il ſole
Ogni baſſo vapor. Queſta a' mortali
Della penoſa vita
Tempra le noje, e ricompenſa i danni.
Queſta in mezzo agli affanni
Gl'infelici allegra: in mezzo all'ire
Queſta placa i tiranni: i lenti ſprona,
I fugaci incatena,
Anima i vili, i temerarj affrena;
E del ſuo dolce impero,
Che letizia conduce,
Che diletto produce ove ſi ſtende,
Sente ognuno il poter, neſſun l'intende.

The light divine of beauty's heav'nly ray
Gives power ceſtial whereſoe'er it ſhines;
The ſluggiſh ſoul it renders light and gay,
As vapours groſs the ſun to mount inclines.

The ills of life it tempers, clears its gloom,
And pays the labour of the hardeſt toil;
Affliction cheers in fate's fevereſt doom,
And ſooths the horrors of defeat and ſpoil.

The fiercest tyrant's rage it soon can quell,

Can spur the slow, and chain the fugitive;

Can animate the dull, the rash repel,

And joy ineffable to all can give.

ASTREA PLACATA. For the Empress's birth-day,
1739. Set by *Predieri*.

IL NATAL DI GIOVE. For the Emperor's birth-day,
1740. Set by *Bonno*.

L'AMOR PRIGIONIERO, Vienna, 1741. Set
by *Reutter*.

IL VERO OMAGGIO. Set by *Bonno*, 1743.

AUGURIO DI FELICITA. A cantata. Set by
Reutter, and performed by three Arch-dutcheffes,
1749.

LA RISPETTOSA TENEREZZA. For the performance
of three Arch-dutcheffes, on the Empress
queen's birth-day, 1750. Set by *Reutter*.

TRIBUTO DI RISPETTO E D'AMORE. Performed
by three Arch-dutcheffes, on the Emperor's
birth-day. Set to music by *Reutter*.

LA GARA. Performed by an Arch-dutcheff,
and two Ladies of the Imperial court, on the
birth of the Arch-dutcheff *MARIA ANTONIA*,
afterwards queen of France, 1755. Set by
Reutter.

IL SOGNO. Performed by the Arch-dutcheff
Marianna, and two Ladies, 1756. Set by
Reutter.

LA

LA RITROVIA DISARMATA, Peevishness disarmed: Written for the court of Spain, 1759.

ALCIDE AL BIVIO. Written for the nuptials of the Arch-duke Joseph, 1760, and set to music by *Hasse*.

L'APE, or the Bee. Written for the court of Spain, 1760.

L'ATENAIDE, OVVERO AFFETTI GENEROSI. Written for the performance of five Arch-dutcheffes. Set by *Bonno*, 1762.

EGERIA. Set by *Hasse*, for the coronation of Joseph II, king of the Romans, 1764.

IL PARNASSO CONFUSO. Set by *Gluck*, and performed by four Arch-dutcheffes, at the second nuptials of Joseph II, 1765.

LA CORONA, a drama of one act, for the performance of four Arch-dutcheffes. Set by *Gluck*, 1765.

LA PACE FRA LE TRE DEE, a festal entertainment, written for the court of Spain, 1765.

PARTENOPE ditto, written at Vienna, for the marriage of FERDINAND IV, king of the two Sicilies, with the Arch-dutcheffs MARIA JOSEPHINA, 1767. Set by *Hasse*.

In these compositions, however short, we always find vivacity in the action and dia-

logue, grandeur and truth of character, a happy delineation of the affections, clearness, spirit, a melodious arrangement of the words and phrases, force in the recitatives, and elegance in the airs; the most sound philosophy in the sentiments, and fancy and good taste in the decorations and machinery. So that it is manifest, that it was the poet's wish at once to feed the imagination, delight the ear, enlighten the understanding, and move the heart.

These festal pieces, though too short for operas, or a whole night's entertainment, may be compared to the French *petites pièces*, or our short dramas (not farces) of one, two, or three acts.

It has been observed by an Italian critic (*d*), that, "In these short pieces the poet has frequently treated of serious and philosophical matters, too profound and complicated for a mixt audience in a public theatre: such as the immortality of the soul, harmony of the spheres, or of creation; but in all, we find the purest principles of virtue and morality given to the interlocutors, who

(*d*) Giamb. Aleff. Morefchi.

were

were generally Arch-dukes and Arch-dutcheffes."

Court poems, birth-day odes, &c. used to be composed of such childish mythology, and nauseous flattery, as no man of good taste and sound judgment would even deign to read ; but these festal compositions of Metastasio are such, as not only the lovers of poetry, but moral philosophers, will read with equal pleasure.

CANTATAS.

The first cantatas which our author seems to have written, were twelve, which he produced expressly for Porpora, before he left Italy. Saverio Mattei avers that he has found a copy of these cantatas at Naples, with the music, in the hand writing of Porpora, who calls them twelve *Cantate dell' Abate Metastasio*. In 1735, while this composer was in England, he published his music to these cantatas, in 4to, and dedicated them to his Royal Highness FREDERIC PRINCE OF WALES. I have a copy of this work now before me ; and though time has robbed the airs of some of their pristine

novelty and grace, the recitatives are still admirable. Indeed, the Italian recitative, which received its last forms and polish chiefly from the elder SCARLATTI (Alessandro) and PORPORA, seems as fixed and permanent as a dead language; and, while melody is as fluctuating as the waves of the sea, recitative seems in stability to resemble *terra firma*.

The poetry of some of these cantatas was improved and polished by Metastasio, and published with others, in editions of his works, which, late in life, he superintended. Seventeen cantatas appear in the last Paris edition, which have been set by Sarti, Mortellari, and the principal composers of the present times.

Besides these, there appear in the Nice edition, two cantatas of a comic cast:

LA CIOCCOLATA,

ED

IL TABACCO,

Supposed to be written in his early youth; with two others, for two voices, in dialogue:

LA DANZA

ED

IL CICLOPE.

And

And the five following short pieces, written for the Imperial Court, which are likewise stiled CANTATAS :

- I. LA VIRTUOSA EMULAZIONE. 1751. Set by *Reutter*.
- II. L'AURORA, & L'ESTATE. Set by *Wagenfeil*, 1759.
- III. L'INVERNO, OVVERO LA PROVIDA PASTORELLA. 1760. Set by *Wagenfeil*.
- IV. IL QUADRO ANIMATO. 1760. *Wagenfeil*, for two voices.
- V. L'ARMONICA. 1769. Set by *Hasse* (c).

CANZONETTE.

CANZONETTA, for a dance of rustics, set by *Bonno*, in 1740, for the Arch-duchess of Austria, Maria Theresa, afterwards Princess of Lorain, and other ladies of the Imperial Court.

- I. LA PRIMAVERA, Spring. Written at Rome, 1719.

(c) This cantata was written by sovereign command, for Miss CECILIA DAVIES, to sing at the Imperial Court to the accompaniment of her sister, on the *Harmonica*, or *Glasser*.

- II. L'ESTATE,

- II. L'ESTATE, or Summer, 1724.
 III. LA LIBERTÀ, à Nice. Written at Vienna,
 1733.
 IV. PALINODIA, à Nice, 1746.
 V. LA PARTENZA. 1749.
-

SONNETS.

On the celebrated musical composer, GASPARINI,
 at Rome, 1719.
 With Twenty-eight more, on various subjects
 and occasions.

Metastasio owns, in one of his letters, that
 he does not think his genius happily formed
 for a *Sonnetteer*; and it *does* seem, as if he
 had felt the restraint and difficulty of its
 construction. His sonnets being by no means
 so superior to those of other lyric bards,
 ancient and modern, as many of his more
 happy productions.

COMPLIMENTI.

These are short poetical felicitations, which
 were set to music by Haffe, Wagenfeil, and
 Reutter, and performed at Court on birth-
 days,

days, by the Arch-dutcheſſes, before their Imperial Majeſties. They appear in the *Nice* edition, for the firſt time, among the poſthumous works of our author, eight in number, ſome for one, and ſome for two voices.

STROFE PER MUSICA,

D'A CANTARSI A CANONE;

OR SHORT STANZAS TO BE SUNG IN ROUNDS, OR
CANONS.

Theſe amount to Thirty-five, many of them appear in the Italian Collection of Catches, Rounds, and Canons, brought to England, by Borſini, and published by Walfh, about the year 1748. Metaſtaſio is ſaid to have ſet thirty of them himſelf, in three parts, which are ſuppoſed to be in the poſſeſſion of his executors, the family of Martinetz.

INTERMEZZI.

Theſe, two in number, were written by our author in 1724, to be performed (as was

then the fashion) between the acts of his *DIDONE ABANDONATA*. The dialogue is carried on with a considerable degree of humour, between a fantastical and capricious *Primadonna* (or first woman) and an absurd *Impresario* (or manager) of an opera.

SIFACE.

This is an old musical drama, of the last century, which was new written by Metastasio for the use of his friend and music-master, Porpora, at Venice, where it was performed, in 1725. We have an ample account of this labour in one of our author's letters.

These are his chief works that were written for music.

Of *GIUSTINO*, a tragedy, produced at fourteen years of age, on the Greek model, it has already been said, that it was not intended for music or recitative in the dialogue, though the chorusses, which terminate each act, require measured melody. The resemblance observed (Vol. I. p. 7) between an incident in this tragedy, and Shakspeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, cannot generate

nerate a suspicion of plagiarism in Metastasio, if it be remembered, that the plot of Shakespeare's tragedy was taken from Arthur Brooke's imitation of the Italian story of *Giulietta*, by *Luigi da Porto* (f); and it was more likely for Metastasio to copy this affecting circumstance from his countryman, than from Shakspeare, whose name, at this early period of his life had probably not arrived at his knowledge; and who had not availed himself of all the advantages of this afflicting incident, but let Romeo die, before Juliet revives. And, upon examination, it appears, from Metastasio's own declaration, that the whole plot of his *Giustino* was taken from the *Italia liberata* of *Trissino*.

Giustino, with all its imperfections, is perhaps the most grave, regular, and accurate drama, that has ever been produced at so early a period of life.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

NOT INTENDED FOR MUSIC.

1. LA STRADA DELLA GLORIA. *Saggio.* The Path to Glory &c. *Drama.* Written at Rome;

(f) See Malone's Edition of Shakespeare, 8vo. 1799, Vol. IX.

in

in 1718, on the death of his Preceptor and Patron, *Gravina*; and read by the Author, at a public meeting of the Academy of the Arcadi.

II. LA MORTE DI CATONE. The Death of Cato.

III. L'ORIGINE DELLE LEGGI. The Origin of Laws. An Elegy.

These three Poems are written in *Terza Rima*, the versification of DANTE.

EPITALAMI.

I. On the Nuptials of the PRINCE and PRINCESS DI BELMONTE. Written at Naples, 1720.

II. On the Marriage of Signor D. Giambatista FILOMARINA, 1722.

III. On the Nuptials of Signor D. Francesco GAETANO, and Donna Giovanni SANSEVERINO. 1723.

IDYLLIUMS.

I. IL RATTO D'EUROPA.

II. IL CONVITO DEGLI DEI.

III. TETI

III. TETI, E PELÒ.

IV. ODE on the Imperial Residence at Schonbrunn.

V. I VOTI PUBBLICI, per Maria Teresa, Imperatrice Regina, 1766.

VI. LA PUBBLICA FELICITA. On the Empress Queen's Recovery from the Small-pox. 1767.

VII. LA SCOMESSA. The Wager. 1755.

This Quatrain was written, by desire, on the following occasion:—The Empress Queen, when pregnant of her youngest daughter, afterwards Queen of France, laid a wager with Count DIETRICKSTEIN, that the promised offspring would be an Arch-dutchess. As soon as brought to bed, her Imperial Majesty sent word to the Count, that *a Princess was born, and that two drops of water did not more resemble each other, than the Mother and her Child.* The Count paid his lost bet with a figure in porcelaine, representing his own person, kneeling on one knee, and holding in his right-hand the following verses, written on a small slip of paper :

*Io perdei: l' Augusta Figlia
A pagar mi ha condannata;
Ma s'è ver che a Voi somiglia,
Tutto il mondo ha guadagnata.*

The Wager's lost—a Daughter's given!
And I submit with joy unfeign'd;
For if like You this gift of Heaven,
The world entire a prize has gain'd.

VIII. VERSETTI. Lines sent with some prints
of the Poet's head, to the Marchesa ZAVAGLIA.

*Queste poche immaginette
Sono, è vero, opre imperfette
D'un Artista dozzinale;
Ma per me gran pregio avranno
Se impedirvi almen sapranno
D'obbliar l'Originale,*

'Tis true these little off'rings seem
Unworthy objects of esteem,
Thus clumsily engrav'd;
Yet blessings I shall on them shower,
If from oblivion, by their power,
Th' original is sav'd.

IX. Madrigal for Prince HILBERGHAUSEN, to
send to the QUEEN of ENGLAND, with an
ivory shuttle, turned by himself.

TRANSLATIONS.

- I. Translation of a Greek Epigram.
- II. ——— of the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, in
Blank Verse, with notes.

- III. Translation of the Sixth Satire of the Second Book of Horace, in *Terze Rime*.
 IV. ——— of the Fifth Epistle of the First Book of Horace, in Stanzas.
 V. ——— of the Third Satire of Juvenal.

The *Treatise on the Italian Theatre*, which Metastasio promised Bettinelli, the Printer, soon after his arrival in Vienna, seems to have ended in his *Estratto della Poetica d'Aristotile*; of which, as it is his sole work in Prose, if we except his Letters, and being posthumous, but little known, we shall terminate the Catalogue of his Works by some account.

- VI. ESTRATTO DELL'ARTE POETICA D'ARISTOTILE, e Considerazioni su la Medesima. An Abstract of Aristotle's Art of Poetry, with Remarks.

Metastasio's Introduction, to explain the object of this Abstract, is the following:

“ The reputation of Aristotle, established and defended by the universal consent and veneration of twenty-two centuries, if not due to the wonderful extent of his sublime talents, and the immensity of his acquaintance

with every species of science, would have sufficient weight to command the respect and gratitude of all subsequent times, if it were only remembered, that he was the first Philosopher in all antiquity, that we know of, who was able to form a clear, minute, and indisputable analysis of human reason; and who, furnishing it with distinctions and divisions, as so many secure and necessary beacons, has discovered the road by which we may most safely and courageously travel in the search of truth. The having recourse, therefore, to such an oracle in our doubts is laudable, especially for Poets, whom he has particularly supplied with the rules of their art.

“Persuaded from my earliest youth of this indispensable duty, I proposed to acquaint myself, fundamentally, with the poetical doctrines of such a master; and for this purpose, it appeared to me, that the safest and most certain way to obtain this knowledge pure and uncorrupted, would be from the original fountain itself, whatever labour it might cost me: but, perplexed every moment in the course of my labour, sometimes with doubts concerning a rule which admitted of two senses, sometimes by the obscurity of an expression

pression which to me appeared mysterious ; now by one precept being apparently contradictory to another, now by a new definition of the same subject, totally different from that which had preceded it, and by a hundred difficulties at every step, wholly insuperable to my limited faculties ; I perceived, at length, with infinite mortification, that, with the inconsiderate temerity of a young man, I had unadvisedly plunged into difficulties, and pursued an intricate road, without companion or guide.

“ I had recourse, therefore, to the most learned and eminent critics and commentators of Aristotle’s *Poetics* ; and I should be ungrateful if I did not confess myself indebted to them for the literal sense of many obscure passages in the text : but I should likewise be very insincere, if I did not declare, at the same time, that, after all my laborious researches, I found myself, to my great mortification, much less enlightened, nay, rather infinitely more perplexed, indetermined, and confused, than I was before. And, indeed, who could avoid being confounded by the constant disagreement of men so respectable for their learning ? Who could help being tired with seeking instruc-

tion in so many useless and prolix metaphysical and scholastic treatises, in which the art they promise to illustrate is suffocated? Who could refrain from indignation, when searching in the Greek dramatists, and in Aristotle himself, for the passages cited by the most renowned critics as the foundation of their sovereign decisions, he finds them (as has frequently been my case) *diametrically opposite*, for the most part, to their opinions? And, besides this, who could safely rely on men, however skilful in languages, that were totally without experience in theatrical matters, and yet convinced of their own infallibility?

“ To extricate myself in the best way I was able, from so many doubts, and not entirely to lose the fruits of my study and application, I determined rigorously to examine myself, and to re-peruse, from the beginning, Aristotle’s whole Poetics, extracting, chapter by chapter, whatever I could clearly understand; and confessing my ignorance and uncertainty as to the rest; pointing out such precepts as, though useful perhaps when given, the enormous change of manners, in such a long period of time, has rendered impracticable; and discovering what
rules

rules have erroneously been assigned by modern legislators of the drama to the Greek tragedians, and even to Aristotle himself; and by this means form for my own use, from the text, a clearer and more distinct idea of the nature of *Poetry*, *Imitation*, and *Probability*, than is commonly received.

“The indispensable duties of that employment to which I had for so many years been fortunately destined, had not, till now, allowed me sufficient leisure to execute this task as completely as I wished: but since, I have not neglected, at short intervals, to meditate on the subject as much as my necessary occupations would allow, and to collect together all the materials I was able towards the intended edifice. The day is at length come, when an unusual repose has finally been granted me by my most gracious Sovereign; and I have now, as far as my powers would enable me, fully and exactly terminated my design.

“But Heaven forbid that I should have the presumption to think of forming by this extract a new Art of Poetry! The seducing rank of inventor has already produced more Arts of Poetry than will ever be read, or at least studied and put in practice: indeed,

they are more than sufficiently numerous to confound, discourage, and wholly render dry and arid, the most happy, courageous, bold, and fertile genius, which the wisdom of beneficent nature can produce.

“ The sole object of my labour, was, as much as possible, to justify my own conduct to myself, who am naturally (for my misfortune) the least circumspect of all my judges; and to procure the self-consolation of being convinced, that all those defects from which an uninterrupted experience of more than fifty years, and the incessant endeavour to instruct myself, have not been sufficient to exempt me, should be numbered among the painful and inevitable consequences of human weakness.”

The title of our author's first chapter, is the following :

CHAP. I. “ That Poetry is one of the arts of *Imitation*. In what it differs from other arts. Explanation of the terms *Metre*, *Rhythm*, *Harmony*, *Melody*, and *Modes*. Refutation of the opinion, that compositions written in prose, can be called Poems. That it is not sufficient for a poetical production to be harmonious, and in measure; it ought, likewise, to be noble and elegant.”

His

His definitions of the technica of ancient music, particularly attracted my attention; and I was flattered to find that they generally agree with those that have been given in the *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*. He likewise is of opinion, that the Greeks meant by *Armonia*, what we mean by *Melody*, founding his opinion upon a passage in Plato: *The regulation of the movement is called RHYTHM; but the regulation of the voice (with respect to high and low) is called Harmony (g).*

And this is Padre Martini's opinion: *Harmony*, with the ancients, meant the regulation of a single voice, with respect to the intervals of a given scale or key.

Melody, indeed, is not defined as in the Dissertation above-mentioned: Metastasio makes it only a more airy and elegant kind of melos; but Aristotle, in a passage which he has quoted from him (b), does not oppose *artificial* and *florid* melody to *simple* and *plain*, but *music sung* to *instrumental music*: for *φύλη μεσική*, or *φύλοι μελω*, *naked music*, seems always to imply *instrumental music*, or

(g) *De Legib.* Lib. ii.

(b) Τὸ δὲ μεσικὸν ὡς αὐτὸς ἵνασι φησὶ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ φύλῃ ἀγαθὸν καὶ μετὰ μελωδίας. *Arist. Polit.* Lib. viii. Cap. 5.

music without words. Melodia, is melody sung; that is, poetry sung.

Metafasio thinks *modo* sometimes confined to key, and sometimes to measure. Our old writers on music, down to Morley and Ravenscroft, applied the word *mood* only to time or measure; but the word *modo*, in Italian, always means key. To the terms *modus, tonos, tropos*, Metafasio gives great latitude, and refers to Padre Martini for more minute information. He seems of opinion, that, in antiquity, there was no poetry without numbers, or without *singing* (i). The *diver-*
-*bii* of the ancient Romans, he calls *recitative*; and supposes that in the *cantici*, strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, as well as in the chorus when sung by all, or by a single actor, melody (or as we call it *air*) was used.

CHAP. II. Here our author treats
“ Of the different objects of imitation.
Difficulty of determining what Aristotle
meant by dividing imitable characters into
best, worst, and middle class of good and
bad.”

(i) In modern times, however, in the church, and in many of our oratorios, prose is sung to measured music.

CHAP.

CHAP. III. "Of the various ways in which Poets may avail themselves of the means and subjects of Imitation. In what respects Homer and Aristophanes resemble each other. Reasons assigned by different people of Greece; for arrogating to themselves the invention of the drama."

CHAP. IV. Poetry is deduced "from the natural inclination which men have to imitation and song. Proofs of this opinion produced by Aristotle: other proofs not given by him, with regard to music; which, perhaps, he did not think necessary. Differences between an *imitation* and a *copy*; the ignorance of which distinction, produces the greatest absurdities. Indispensible necessity of song (musical tones) in speaking to the public. Proofs that all dramas, comedies, as well as tragedies, were sung throughout by the Greeks and Romans, are given by Metastasio from ten different ancient authors. Examination of the opinion of Aristotle, that Sophocles perfected tragedy, by the introduction of a third personage on the stage."

Our author has manifested much learning and ingenuity in the course of this chapter. He is, in general, clear and intelligible on

the subject of Imitation : allowing a natural tendency in human creatures, above all other animals, to imitation. “ On the stage, we imitate all kinds of characters, good and bad. We can even imitate the noises of inferior animals.”

His Eloge of Music, after saying that the love of it is a natural instinct of humanity, entirely coincides with my own.

“ Who can doubt (says he) of the efficacy of Music on our minds ? Who is it, that has not felt its effects on himself, and observed them in others ? Who sees not that our passion for this art has introduced it into all human actions ? In the service of religion, in festive assemblies, in funeral pomp, and even in military fury, music has a considerable share. The most barbarous and savage nations are pleased with it : infants listen to it even in the cradle, before the senses are perfect, and it calms their complaints. The criminal in a dungeon, the slave in chains, seeking alleviation from their affliction and labour, find it in song (*k*).”

(*k*) See *Preface to Present State of Music in France and Italy*, published twelve years before these extracts appeared, and anterior to the author's interview with Metastasio.

Crura

Crura sonant ferro, sed canit inter opus.

Tibull. L. ii. Ellig. 7.

— The fetter'd slave, the drudge of fate,
Sings, shakes his irons, and forgets his state.

GRANGER,

Metastasio gives further reflections from “the ingenious and acute Castelvetro,” on the necessity of addressing persons at a distance, in musical tones (1). His proofs from Aristotle, Cicero, Livy, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Suetonius, Donato, &c. have almost all been previously cited in the *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, from the same places, in favour of the opinion, that all the ancient dramas, tragic and comic, were entirely sung, and accompanied by instruments.

Dramatic poetry is not only the *imitating* the characters and manners of men, but the imitation of another art: that of music. As, according to Metastasio, “there is no poetry without music: the arrangement of words, and different metres, is music.” In painting, indeed, an artist has natural objects to copy; in poetry, he has them to

(1) See *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*.—Chap. on Dramatic Music.

describe;

describe; but what, it may be asked, has a musician, in *nature*, to *imitate*? Does music, in its nature, imitate poetry? I never could clearly understand Aristotle's meaning, as to music being an *imitative art*. Is it an imitation of poetry, in its measures and rhythm; and in the tones of speech, lengthened, polished, and impassioned?

But my learned and excellent friend, the Rev. T. Twining, in the Second Dissertation prefixed to his Translation and Notes on ARISTOTLE'S TREATISE ON POETRY, has cleared this matter up more to my satisfaction than Metastasio, or any of Aristotle's commentators that I have seen.

The title of my friend's Dissertation is this: "On the different Senses of the Word *Imitative*, as applied to Music by the Ancients and Moderns." In which he confines musical *imitations*, to the raising *emotions* and *ideas*. And I think the former will include the *passions*. There are mere instrumental movements, which awaken ideas of *joy*, *sorrow*, *tenderness*, *melancholy*, *solemnity*, *contrition*, *military ardor*, &c. Thus far it may be allowed the title of an *imitative art*. As to music *imitating* human speech, which Dr. Beattie denies, but which Mr. Twining seems
to

to have established, as much as a matter that depends on fancy, feeling, and present humour, *can* be established ; it is an opinion to which I subscribe (*m*).

Indeed,

(*m*) Mr. Twining, in his Second Dissertation, p. 51, speaking of the *imitative* powers of music, with admirable ingenuity, has assigned a use for the ancient *enharmonic genus*, which seems more probable than any thing which has hitherto been suggested on that dark subject. “ *Dramatic* music (says he) is often *strictly imitative*. It imitates, not only the *effect* of the words, by exciting correspondent *emotions*, but also the *words* themselves *immediately*, by tones, accents, inflexions, intervals, and rhythmical movements, *similar* to those of speech. That this was peculiarly the character of the *dramatic* music of the ancients, seems highly probable, not only from what is said of it by ancient authors : but from what we know of their music *in general* ; of their scales, their *genera*, their fondness for *chromatic* and *enharmonic* intervals, which approach so nearly to those sliding and unassignable inflexions (if I may so *speak*) that characterize the melody of speech.”

It may be thought too fanciful, perhaps, but it seems to me, as if dancing, music, and poetry, were reciprocally imitations of each other ; it is certain, at least, that they are nearly connected, and resemble each other ; music imitates the steps of a dance, and the numbers of verse. Hence poetical proportions are, perhaps, called *feet*, and musical, *rhythm*. Musical measures, times, accents, and bars, are equally wanted by all the three arts ; and all three mutually assist each other in the Italian *ballata* (whence our word

Indeed, I have long experienced and allowed, that by slow, quick, gay, and sorrowful movements, music, without words, can excite sensations of various kinds, and remind us of former events and feelings. Farther than this, music does not seem an *imitative art*. If it imitates any thing human, important, and impressive, it is perhaps, the cry of passion, whether of joy or sorrow. It can laugh and be gay; it can grieve and lament, with a little help of imagination. When it has words to express, it should be the composer's and performer's ambition to lengthen and tune the tones of speech and passion; to imagine what tones of voice, in a certain situation, would best, in the language of music, excite and enforce the ideas to be expressed.

The movements in music, and measures in poetry, have so great an affinity, that their rhythmical effects arise from the same cause. An heroic verse, in grave and solemn subjects, resembles musical movements in *adagio*, *grave*, and *largo*, in common time. This may be pursued to a much greater

word *ballad*) which originally implied an air that was sung to words, and danced at the same time.

extent

extent than we have room for here (n). But as far as concerns Aristotle's doctrine, Mr. Twining's extensive learning and reading, joined to his knowledge, practice, and experience in music, have enabled him to explain this hitherto dark and unintelligible subject, better than a mere scholar, or musician, however deep in his particular faculty, could possibly have done.

CHAP. V. of Metastasio's *Esſatto*, treats "Of comedy and its authors. Of *comédie larmoiante*, or sentimental comedy. In what particulars epic poems and tragedies agree, and in what they differ. Of the *unity of time*, of *fable*, and of *place*." In this chapter, the *unities* are admirably explained, and their doctrine, to my comprehension, well confuted, and relinquished, by Metastasio; who has proved, that the Greek tragic writers themselves had no such narrow limits. He gives the *time* and *place* of the chief dramas of antiquity, Greek and Latin, in all which these unities are violated. The unity of action or fable, seems more particularly

(n) M. Marpurg, of Berlin, has written a Treatise in German, on the comparative length and accents of musical notes, and lingual syllables. *Anleitung zur Singcomposition*, 4to. 1758.

recommended by Aristotle, and more constantly observed than either of the other two, by the ancients. This precept, Metastasio tells us, he has himself obeyed, as much as possible: "as the fixing the attention of the spectator upon one illustrious and interesting character, must produce a more sensible and perfect effect, than when divided." But even this rule, he says, must be construed with discretion and exceptions, or else what would become of the beautiful episodes of Homer and Virgil, and the secondary characters in the ancient dramas? Metastasio, in his more than fifty years study and experience, has by his works, discovered what *can* be practised with effect, and what ought to be avoided, better than all the poetics of mere theorists, can ever teach to dramatic writers (o).

CHAP.

(o) Mr. Twining, in a liberal and comprehensive note on that part of Aristotle's poetics which treats of the UNI-TIES, after proving that Dacier, and other commentators, have erroneously asserted that the Stagirite literally and rigorously meant by the *unity of time* to confine the action of a tragedy to the limits of a *single day*, or nearly so; and that the Greek tragic writers *have always adhered to this rule*, says: "For this, and other instances of the same kind, I must content myself with referring the reader to

CHAP. VI. " Definition, division, and explanation, of the several parts of tragedy. Purgation of the passions considered—and whether it is produced only by means of terror and compassion?"

CHAP. VII. " Of the component parts and length of tragedy."

CHAP. VIII. " The unity of hero (the principal character) does not imply unity of action."

CHAP. IX. " Difference between a poet and an historian. A piece in verse, though the subject is neither epic nor dramatic, is nevertheless a poem. Of episodic fables. Of surprize, and its different degrees."

CHAP. X. " Division, and explication of fables. Defence of Corneille."

to the sensible and well written *Estratto della Poetica d'Aristotile*, published among the posthumous works of Metastasio, and which did not fall into my hands, till all my notes were written. It contains many ingenious and sagacious observations. The subject of the dramatic unities, in particular, is discussed at large; and, I think, in a very masterly and satisfactory way. And, with respect to the strict unities of *time* and *place*, he seems perfectly to have succeeded in shewing, that no such rules were imposed on the Greek poets by the critics, or by themselves—nor are imposed on *any* poet, either by the *nature* or the *end* of the dramatic imitation itself."

CHAP. XI. " Of discoveries and revolutions, and their different kinds and effects. Of passion. Doubts concerning the modern French rule, of not shedding blood on the stage."

CHAP. XII. " Of the length and proportion of the several parts of tragedy. Of the chorus. Of the number of acts and personages. Of the airs in modern operas."

The chorus, for the loss of which the enthusiasts for antiquity make such heavy complaint, was originally a religious hymn to Bacchus, at the time of vintage. The acts of the drama were long called *episodes*, after they became of more consequence than the chorus itself; but the public, long used to them, would not suffer a drama to be performed without a chorus, even when it had no connexion with the fable. At length, it became so vulgar and uninteresting, that, like a company of modern psalmodists in a country church, the choral singers were left in the midst of their performance by the audience, at the end of the piece, who would not stay to hear them longer than they could help. But though Metastasio censures the absurdity of this permanent chorus to every drama, he does not think it necessary to
banish

banish every species of chorus from the stage. " The theatre would lose the privilege of availing itself with dignity, delight, and probability, of a chorus in sacrifices, triumphs, feasts, and on many similar occasions, in which it is extremely natural to suppose, that many persons may concur in the same sentiments, and express themselves in the same words." He gives many other instances, where a chorus may be introduced with propriety.

He then proceeds to consider the number of acts, into which a dramatic fable should be divided; and disputes the rule which seems to be laid down by Horace for five acts; shewing, from a passage in one of Cicero's letters, that the usual number of acts in that orator's time, was three. And this was so long established into a law for operas in Italy, that several attempts at five acts, were there much discountenanced. The late philosopher, Diderot, was of opinion, that three acts would be the best division of every drama: as they furnished a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end* (*p*). However, to save the expence and trouble of a third DANCE

(*p*) This division includes the perfect *whole*, required by Aristotle.

(at present the most attractive part of an opera) the whole business of musical dramas, whatever it may be, must constantly be huddled into *two acts*. Metastasio candidly and liberally says, that "the number of acts in every drama should more depend on the business to be transacted, than on rule and custom." But that operas, originally written in three acts, like all those of this poet himself, should be cut, mangled, and *crushed*, rather than compressed, into *two acts*, for no better reason, is treating the remains of the venerable bard with the utmost indignity, not to say stupid barbarity.

After an ample discussion of the chorus and number of acts and characters, in the ancient tragedy, Metastasio says: "Before we quit these subjects, it may be necessary to enquire into the *Revolutions* of the chorus, and to what end its different motions were established; sometimes moving to the left, like the *primum mobile*; sometimes revolving, like the planets, to the right; and sometimes remaining stationary, like the earth. But of the use and beauty of these astronomical representations, invented by the ancients, or ascribed to them by the ingenuity of modern critics, let every one judge
for

for himself. All that seems necessary for us to say on this subject, is, that (in performing the odes) the songs or stanzas which the chorus sung in these revolutions, took the names of *strophe*, that is, *revolution*; *antistrophe*, *counter-revolution*; and *epode*, *addition to the song*. That the poet, in writing these strophes, antistrophes, and epodes, composed them in a different measure from the rest of the tragedy; sometimes quitting the Iambic, availing himself of the more quick and lively anapæstic and trochaic feet; connecting together a certain determinate number of verses, adapted to a particular periodical melody, which might be often repeated to other words in the same measure and cadence: that this more artificial music, which took its name from the revolutions above-mentioned, was not only sung by the chorus alone, but sometimes by turns with the actors, and sometimes by the actors without the chorus. And finally, it is observable, that these determinate melodies, which may be repeated to different words, are exactly of the same kind as the odes, songs, and canzonets, in Italy, which have been faithfully preserved in their form and name, being still universally called *strofe* and *strofette*.

fette. Now what else are the AIRS of our musical dramas, but the ancient *strophes* (q)? And why such an out-cry against these visible and manifest relics of the Greek theatre; and from those very learned folks, who are always recommending to us the imitation of it?

CHAP. XIII. "Of the Protagonistes, or principal character, and of the unhappy catastrophe, recommended by Aristotle."

CHAP. XIV. "Of terror, compassion, and the wonderful. Of the different kinds of tragical actions."

Aristotle allows of but four events, that are proper subjects for tragedy. The *first* is when the principal personage knows the evil which he or she is perpetrating: as Medea, when she murders her children.

The *second*, when the hero or heroine is ignorant of the atrocious deed, till after it is committed: as Oedipus, Alcmæon, and Telegonus.

(q) This description seems almost to fit our old opera songs, in times of *da capo*, if the strophe and antistrophe be imagined the first and second strain of the air, and the epode, *the addition to the song*. And a number of verses to the same periodical melody, resembles our ballads, or songs of many stanzas, to each of which the same air is repeated,

The

The *third*, when the personage, through ignorance, is on the point of committing some horrid action, but is prevented by a sudden discovery, as Merope and Iphigenia.

The *fourth* (which Aristotle regards as the worst and most contemptible) when a character is about to commit a crime, but stops short at the instant he is going to execute his design : as Hæmon, in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, who was determined to kill his father.

“ Now this fourth tragic circumstance (says Metastasio) which is so much disapproved by Aristotle, appears to me (with all due deference to so great a master) capable of being excellently treated. If Hæmon, for example, when in the last agonies near his dying *Antigone*, should have suddenly seen his father Creon appear, who had so unjustly and barbarously been the cause of her death, and in a blind impetus of passion had determined to kill him, but in the very act of giving the blow, overcome by the paternal looks and voice, which he had been accustomed to reverence, had found himself unable to summon courage sufficient to overcome the compunctions of nature and long habits ; and, therefore, being unable to save

his wife, or to avenge her death, in the violence of his rage and despair, if he had killed *himself*, the catastrophe would have been one of the most spirited and affecting, that can be imagined : since it would express at once the highest degree of interest, which love, nature, rage, and despair, united, could produce. Nor would there be wanting the indispensable Aristotelian *pathos*, that is, the emotion which arises from the view of the dying and the wounded."

With respect to confining all the sensations excited by tragedy, to terror and pity, Metastasio says : " All the just respect which I feel for this great philosopher, is not sufficient to convince me, that tragedy, in its operations, can avail itself of no other instruments than Terror and Compassion. It appears to me, that the admiration of virtue, under a thousand different aspects ; as friendship, gratitude, patriotism, fortitude, generosity to foes, and innumerable other modifications ; as well as the abhorrence of the vices of the human heart, which often impede and oppose these virtues ; all these, I say, appear to me efficacious, and fair means of affording delight and instruction, without eternally condemning the spectator
to

to tremble with horror, or weep with affliction."

From this passage, and from the whole tenour of his life and writings, it is manifest, that Metastasio was no *terrorist*. And though Aristotle, in the thirteenth chapter of his Art of Poetry, has pronounced, " *that to be the best constructed tragedy which ends unhappily*;" yet Mr. Twining, in his notes on this chapter, after allowing that " nothing seems more just, or more accurately expressed, than Aristotle's idea of the end of tragedy; that it is *to give that pleasure, which arises from pity and terror, through imitation*" — την ἀπο εἰλες καὶ φόβου δια μιμησιως ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν—Cap. xiv. (Transl. P. II. sect. 13.) very much to my satisfaction, adds, " but the Greek tragedians will be thought, I believe, by most modern readers, to have sometimes pushed this principle rather too far, and to have excited a degree of horror, which even the charms of imitation cannot well be conceived to have softened into pleasurable emotion; and it appears to me, that Aristotle himself inclined to this opinion, and that he intended this chapter as a lesson of caution to the poets against this excess. He seems plainly to have considered

the *actual* murder of a mother, a son, a brother, and the like, as incidents rather too horrible to be exhibited in *any* way. If the deed *must* be done, let it, he says, if possible—if the story will permit it—be done ignorantly. But it will be still better, if you can avoid doing it entirely; if you can contrive to make the *expectation*, combined with the *atrociousness* of the event expected, answer your purpose, by raising as much anxiety, commiseration and terror in the spectator, as may consist with the *pleasure* which is the end of tragedy, and then relieving him at last, by prevention, at the very moment of execution.” And this has been almost invariably the practice of Metastasio.

The excellent interpreter and commentator of Aristotle, just quoted, has cited a passage from Rousseau, against the excess of *tragic terrorism*, which seems perfectly in unison with Metastasio’s opinion on the subject. In concluding his *Nouvelle Eloïse*, the citizen of Geneva says: “I am unable to conceive what pleasure the authors of many of our tragedies can take, in imagining characters so full of wickedness and horror, and *putting themselves in the place of those they represent,*

represent, making them act and speak such things, as it is impossible to see or hear without shuddering."

With respect to the usual practice of terminating operas *happily*, it may afford some gratification to the curiosity of those who interest themselves in such exhibitions, to trace it from the first dramas of modern times, that were recited in music.

Rinuccini, author of *Eurydice*, the first regular opera, treated the well-known story of Orpheus differently from Virgil, in order to terminate his piece *happily*. In this drama, Orpheus obtains Eurydice from the shades, by the power of song, *unconditionally*: indeed, the author apologizes to his patroness, Mary of Medicis, in celebration of whose nuptials with Henry IV of France, in 1600, it was written, for having dared to alter the termination of the fable of Orpheus; justifying himself by its being a time of jubilation; and adding, that it was the practice of the Greek poets in other fables: Sophocles, in his *Ajax*, had deviated from Homer in a similar manner. *Rinuccini*, eight years after, wrote a second opera, *ARIANNA*, which he calls a tragedy, though this likewise terminates *happily*, by comforting the
unfortunate

unfortunate princess, who had been abandoned by Theseus, with a celestial spouse, in the character of "Bacchus, ever fair and young."

These two first musical dramas, perhaps, served as models for subsequent exhibitions of the same kind: for in examining a complete collection of all the operas that have ever been performed at Venice, from 1637 to the present time, "Medea's murdering knife" seems never to have been used; and the Protagonistes, contrary to the precept of Aristotle, generally proceeds from *bad* to *good*, and not from bad to worse, or from happiness to misery (r).

Not one of Apostolo Zeno's numerous operas, has an unhappy catastrophe; and out of twenty-six dramas of Metastasio, only three, *Dido*, *Cato*, and *Atilius Regulus*, terminate in a disastrous manner. When *Cato* was first performed at Rome, in 1728, and killed himself in the third act, the piece

(r) Indeed the modern *Pyramus* and *Thisbe*, died like two swans, in an opera of that name, in 1774; they were half an hour in the tuneful agonies of death: and the performers *Rauzini* and the *Schindlerin*, being resuscitated by an *encore*, delighted the audience with their own *death-song*, a second time.

was ill-received ; and the next day, an advertisement was found on the statue of Pasquin, " inviting the company of death to the funeral of Cato, who lies *extinct* in the Theatre *delle Dame*."

It has been said that the emperor Charles VI, having an utter aversion to terrific terminations of the dramas that were performed at his court, and wishing to send the audience home in good humour from the theatre, Stampiglia, the imperial laureat, and his successors, Apostolo Zeno, and Metastasio, to gratify the taste of their patron, reversed the Aristotelian canon, and changed the fortune of their heroes from *bad* to *good*. But this seems to have been the general practice of much more ancient lyric poets than these. In all Metastasio's best dramas, which terminate with the happiness of the principal characters, there are previous scenes of infinite distress and pathos, arising from events and situations of suffering virtue. To see a magnanimous and virtuous character, after great trials and sufferings, by which he has gained our affection, pass from misery to a state of happiness, is more instructive, as well as more grateful, to the human heart, than the death of villains, or of those
who,

who, like Oedipus, suffer every species of woe for inevitable crimes, committed through ignorance. It is rather *danger* than *terror*, which awakens our pity in the tragedies of Metastasio.

The cavalier Planelli (s), one of the best Italian writers on the melodrama, or opera, says : that “ the diminishing the horrors of tragedy, whatever *Misanthropes* may say, is a certain proof of the progress which urbanity, clemency, and benevolence, have made in modern times. The ancient Greeks, descended from the barbarous and ferocious nations which first inhabited that country, retained, in their most civilized cities, a taste for terrific and sanguinary exhibitions. The tragedies which remain of the three great models, all breathe that national spirit. The characters, indeed, in these dramas, are magnanimous and grand ; but, at the same time, impetuous and inhuman. To move a people, accustomed to horror, it was the business of tragedy to adopt fables, full of the most atrocious and disastrous events, or little attention or success could be expected from their representation. But modern tra-

(s) *Dell'Opera in Musica Trattato*. Napoli. 1772. 8vo.

gedy, cultivated by a people many ages civilized, friends to commerce, hospitable to strangers, and professing a religion which inspires charity, mildness, peace, compassion, and beneficence, if it did not diminish atrocity, would disgust, beyond the power of poetry and music to suppress."

Metastasio certainly meant this *Espratto* and commentary as an apology for deviating from the Stagirite in his own practice, though he had not the courage to publish it. But in writing for modern music, he surely had powerful reasons for extending the subjects of his dramas beyond mere terror and compassion, to which Aristotle, and his implicit followers, think all tragedy should be confined. Our poet has, indeed, successfully violated this canon of the ancient dramatic legislator, by exciting an interest in the sufferings and rewards of every public and social virtue: subjects more appropriated to musical expression, than the terrors excited by atrocious crimes and dire calamities. This is still adhering to another assertion of Aristotle: that the chief end of tragedy is *to purge the passions*. The mental cathartics indeed of the modern lyric bard are not violent, but rather lenient and anodyne, than

caustics

caustics or stimulants. The ridicule frequently thrown upon singing in pain, distress, and misery, by persons ignorant that ancient tragedies, with all their terrors, were constantly *sung*, was a sufficient motive to Metastasio to try to enlighten the public, by his remarks on particular doctrines of Aristotle. Indeed, those who either hear or peruse the dramas of Metastasio, with a determination to allow him no merit, but that to which he is intitled by his implicit obedience to the decrees of Aristotle and of French critics, or the servile imitation of the ancient Greek poets, rob him of much just praise, and themselves of pleasure, in not giving way to their own reason and feeling, instead of judging by line and rule. The delight which he has excited on the stage, with the assistance of music, and in the closet, with that of unbiaſſed taste and sensibility, seems justly to intitle him to more praise as an *original* writer, than *could* be due to him for mere classical larceny or imitation. What but oblivion, did his learned preceptor Gravina acquire by his tragedies, written exactly on the Greek model? Our countryman, Mr. Mason's tragedies on that plan, will ever be
admired

admired, in perusal, for the exquisite beauty of the poetry ; but it is yet a doubt, whether they will ever have due justice done them on the stage, for which, indeed, he never intended them, nor did he expect they could succeed in representation, as originally written.

It has been said, that Mr. Gray used to dispute the merit of Metastasio ; and would not allow his dramas to be legitimate tragedies, or any thing more than mere sketches, or outlines of tragedy, compared with the expanded dramas of his favourites, Racine and Voltaire. His friend, Mr. Mason, has lately been more liberal, in acknowledging the merit of the Italian lyric poet, in a note (p. 102) of his ingenious *Essays on English Church Music*. “ How great a dramatic writer (says he) would Metastasio have been, if not compelled, in subserviency to his musical composers, to furnish them only with *Libretti* ! It must, however, be allowed, that his lyrical dramas, as originally written, in respect to theatrical contrivance, and judicious developement of the story, infinitely excel the generality of our modern tragedies.”

But besides the merit allowed him by Mr. Maſon, the beauty of Metaſtaſio's ſentiments and poetry, have been the admiration of all Europe, for more than fifty years.

Modern muſic is, perhaps, too florid for narrative poetry. The airs certainly impede the buſineſs of the drama, and uſurp an attention of another kind. It is doubtleſs true, that if muſic had been out of the queſtion, Metaſtaſio's dramas might have been eaſily more expanded, and rendered fitter for declamation, and, perhaps, peruſal. But one of the greateſt difficulties which Metaſtaſio had to encounter, and for the vanquiſhing of which he has been the moſt admired by thoſe who have ſtudied the muſical drama, was the compreſſing the fables he choſe, into ſo ſmall a compaſs, yet rendering all his plots clear, his principal characters ſtrongly marked and conſiſtent, and his ſentiments tender, nervous, or philoſophical, as occaſion required.

If Metaſtaſio, in writing for muſic, had expanded ſentiment in ſuch long ſpeeches, as thoſe of which Mr. Gray has left us examples, in the Fragment of his *Agrippina*, his dramas might have been called *fine tragedies*, but would never have ſucceeded as *operas*, in which ſentiment is expanded by
vocal

vocal expression, arising from situation, more than by *verbal articulation* (t).

Regarded as pieces for *declamation*, the characters and sentiments are not sufficiently expanded; but, as *musical dramas*, they are in all respects the most perfect that have ever been produced.

(t) *Giulio Strozzi*, one of the early lyric poets of Venice, in his *Delia*, an opera performed in that city, 1639, entirely in recitative, ten years before any thing like an *air* was attempted; after saying, in an advertisement at the end of the *Libretto*, that he had cut out more than 300 verses in the representation of his opera, that he might not abuse the patience of the audience, adds, that "it is the duty of a poet to relinquish his *flourishes* and *divisions* (*sue Gorghe*) which are his digressions and episodes, to make room for the divisions (*passaggi*) of the fingers." No time is kept in recitative; so that the singer was allowed to dilate and embellish sentiment, *ad libitum*. A poet was then more at the mercy of the singer, than of the composer; and when vocal powers are great, and (as often happens) out-run propriety and discretion, the performer will not wait for moments of passion to display his taste, execution, and expression, but will riot in *florid song*, whenever a liquid syllable or open vowel shall occur. Marchesi has revived this primitive custom of *gracing recitative*, not more to the satisfaction of the poet, or favourable to the business of the drama, perhaps, than *long introductory symphonies*, or *arie di bravura*, of which the admirers of simplicity in the narrative music of the drama, so much complain.

“ In every work regard the writer's end,
 Since none can compass more than they intend.”

Mr. Gray's severity of decision concerning the merit of Rouffeau's *Nouvelle Eloïse*, is little less surprising than his blindness to the merit of Metastasio. Among all the citizens of Geneva's faults and singularities, *insipidity* and want of interest, we believe, has never been laid to his charge, by any other writer.

The rest of the chapters of Metastasio's *Abstract*, which, in all, amount to twenty-nine, are replete with learning, ingenuity, good taste, and, above all, with *good sense*; which, according to Horace, is the first qualification of every writer :

Scribendi recte, sapere est et principium et fons.

A. P. v. 309.

It was intended to have concluded these Memoirs, with a translation of the whole *Estratto*, not only as a specimen of our author's style in *prose*, but abilities in criticism; but the great number of his letters which have been inserted, will not allow sufficient space for a work of so considerable a length, in the present publication. And as for the additional

additional three volumes of his inedited works, mentioned in the Preface, and of which I was extremely ambitious of being the first to give a detailed account to the English admirers of Metastasio; after employing every probable means which my eagerness to be in possession of them, previous to the publication of these Memoirs could suggest, I have, at length, had the mortification to hear from Vienna, that the printing the work which Mademoiselle Martines had reason to expect would be ready for publication in April last, has been impeded by the death of the Italian printer, *Alberti*. And now the same Vienna correspondent writes word, that on the 23d of last month (December) to his further enquiries, he had only received for answer, that "the work would be published early in the next month: the same answer which had been given for seven months past." So that, for the present, I must content myself with giving my readers the opinion of an excellent Italian critic on the most interesting article among these posthumous pieces, which he has seen in manuscript.

" Besides the *Abstract* of the Poetics of Aristotle, another precious monument exists

of Metastasio's profound study of the Greek dramatic writers. A manuscript is in the possession of his executors, superscribed with his own hand : *Esame di tutte le Tragedie e Commedie Greche per soccorso della mia memoria, e non per pubblicarsi*. By the friendly kindness of the learned counsellor Martinez, I have been indulged with the perusal of this MS. in which the remarks are extended to the *terra incognita* of ordinary critics ; here we see reasons assigned for apparent defects, which the practice of the times rendered necessary ; and here we have a most exact parallel of the whole pieces and their constituent parts, drawn up with the most captivating clearness and sagacity. And here we may perceive, that it was not from the writings of Calderon (as has been carelessly and erroneously asserted) but from the Greek poets, that he learned the art of weaving his plots, and the exquisite reflexions, maxims, and political principles, with which his dialogues are embellished, and which, to common judges, seem scattered at random ; but which were drawn from the purest and deepest springs, and with a most masterly economy,

economy, always appropriated to different climates, ages, laws, and customs (u)."

TO THE SHADE OF METASTASIO.

IF still allow'd to listen, honour'd shade !
And mortal sorrows reach the happy dead,
Oh ! hear with sensibility my strain,
Nor humble tears, nor heart-felt grief disdain !
No views sinister now suspicions raise
That adulation ministers thy praise ;
Thy worth and virtues precious to mankind,
Have long with veneration fill'd my mind.
Thy lenient ethics mitigate each smart,
And, while they flatter, purify the heart,
The furious passions are at thy controul,
And each emotion of the human soul.
Lost must that mortal be, who hears in vain
Thy moral lesson, or thy pious strain !
To Love thy pen could dignity impart,
Devoid of vice and each insidious art ;
Nor hast thou ever deign'd *his* cause to plead,
Unless when worth and honour claim'd the meed,
The friend of virtue in a gay disguise,
Which captivates alike the weak and wise ;
The dissolute and lawless patient hear
Thy tale of woe, and drop a pitying tear.

(u) *Osservazioni sopra Metastasio dell' Abate Bertola.*
Bassano, 1784. 8vo.

The sons of Epicurus learn to feel,
The wounds of suffering worth, and wish to heal;
Insensibly the hardest hearts dilate
At noble deeds, and fain would imitate.

Benignant pow'r ! humanity to charm,
And all its vile propensities disarm ;
Not by harsh rules, which ne'er convince the
mind.

Nor pious cant, of more insipid kind :
More sweet thy moral song, in virtue's praise,
Than sporting fires could to pleasure raise ;
Nor for the stage, was virtue ever dress'd,
In such a pleasing, such alluring vest.

Long may thy precepts regulate the heart,
And joy seraphic to mankind impart !
Long may thy dulcet measures Music guide,
And taste and feeling over art preside !
While intellectual radiance beams around,
And to the heart points each impassion'd sound !

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

AFTER the preceding sheets were printed, and the press was closed, I accidentally heard, that previous to the publication of the *Three Volumes of Metastasio's Posthumous Works*, at Vienna, an itinerant German *Colporteur*, or book pedlar, hearing of the solicitude with which these books had been sought by the English, in that city, during many months, contrived to get the start of the trade by procuring, by some unknown means, the possession of seven or eight copies of each impression of the work, with which he arrived in England a fortnight ago; during which time he had been hawking his *inestimable* little bale of Metastasian goods, with-

out

out success; owing to the price he set upon it being so enormous, that no importer of foreign books would venture to deal with him; nor would he part with a *single* set, on any terms. However, by the favour of a person in whose hands they were left for a day or two, I obtained a sight of them for just three hours; during which short period, I made the following hasty remarks, with which I present my readers, as *addenda* to the Memoirs of the Poet's Life and Writings.

The first volume contains his Observations on the Greek Dramatists, to which there is no other preface or introduction, than the following :

Nota di alcune osservazioni da me fatte sopra tutte le Tragedie e Commedie Greche che ci rimangono, per soccorso della mia memoria. “ Minutes of some observations which I have made on all the Greek Tragedies and Comedies that are come down to us, to assist my memory.”

He begins with the Tragedies of ÆSCHYLUS; seven of which only have been preserved, out of ninety-seven which he is said to have written. Metastasio's analysis of *Prometheus chained*, the first of Æschylus's dramas, was the only one of these short articles

articles which I had time to read. Of this he says :

“ It is difficult to characterize this drama, it is so extravagant and fantastical. The scene is a *horrid rock*. Force and Violence, personified, order Vulcan, in the name of Jupiter, to chain Prometheus to this rock, for having too much favoured human kind. Vulcan executes the command, though with much reluctance ; and not only binds every part of the culprit's body to the rock with iron chains, but fastens his breast to it with adamantine nails. Prometheus, after this, is left alone to curse the tyranny of Jupiter. In the mean time, the daughters of Thetis arrive on the wings of the winds, to form the chorus. They tell him, that they had heard the strokes of the hammer in their grotto at the bottom of the sea, and were come to console him, and to learn the occasion of his disgrace. Prometheus, in the dreadful state in which they found him, relates in a circumstantial manner, the benefits which he had conferred on mankind. Saying, that Jupiter, the usurper of Saturn's kingdom, was a tyrant, and would be dethroned by another, whom he (Prometheus) knew, but whose name he would not reveal,

The

The chorus counsels him to submission ; but he refuses to comply. At length *Oceanus* arrives on a winged monster, neither described nor named, on a visit to the sufferer: pities him, and offers his interposition: it is rejected, and after a long debate, he departs to the sound of Triton's trumpet. The chorus weeps, and advises him to be calm and submissive ; but all in vain. They are interrupted by the arrival of a furious cow ; that is, by the daughter of the river *Inachus*. Prometheus, in spite of the nails in his breast, manifests much curiosity to know the history of this cow. She, with great eloquence, satisfies him ; and he, in correspondent terms, tells her her fortune. A fit of madness agitates the cow, and she quits the stage. Prometheus, still obstinate, continues his imprecations. Mercury enters, and by command of Jove, orders him to declare who it is that will dethrone him, on pain of a violent encrease of his torments. Prometheus laughs at his threats ; insults Jupiter and his messenger, when the heavens grow dark, and a furious storm of wind, thunder, and lightning, ensues. Prometheus cries out, invoking *Themis* (or Justice) to terminate the tragedy.

“ Father Brumoy will not absolutely allow,

allow, that Io appears in the form of a cow; but the author, at verse 590, calls her Βούρω, *bubulis prædita cornibus*: and at verse 675, Κερᾶς, *cornuta*; and the scholiast explains Ἰνς εἰς βὺν μεταβληθεῖσης.

“ There being only a single character chained to a rock, who receives a few visits, it would have been difficult not to preserve the *unity* of place. But Pere Brumoy thinks Æschylus wonderful in having invented this unity.”

Being, at length, in possession of a copy of this posthumous publication, over which my power is unlimited, I shall extend my extracts of the poet's remarks on the Greek dramatists, and give a short account of the rest of the contents of these volumes.

“ *The seven chiefs against Thebes.* This tragedy can hardly be called a drama, consisting only of extreme long choral odes, and a short narrative. The style is extremely lyrical; full of metaphor and imagery, particularly in the choruses. The fable finishes at the 823d verse, with the death of the two hostile brothers. The rest of the play consists of weeping and wailing, and a decree of the people concerning the funeral rites of the slain, granted to Eteocles, and denied to Polynices. Antigone wishes to bury the latter;

latter ; but is opposed by the herald, and the tragedy ends, without the audience knowing how it will be determined. So that the unity of action is violated, and the fable left unfinished. There is a scene between Eteocles and the chorus, against the importunity of fearful women, which is long, useless, and comic.

“ *The Persians*. It is difficult to say what is the real subject of this tragedy. The repetition of the narrative of the defeat of the Persians at the battle of Salamis, and the perpetual lamentations of the chorus of aged Satraps, compose the whole drama. Atossa, the mother of Xerxes, by a kind of magical incantation, evokes the shade of Darius her husband, to give her counsel and news of her son Xerxes. The ghost knows nothing of what has happened, and has it to learn. But afterwards tells her, that Xerxes was ill-advised to contend with Greece. And ere he disappears, gives the following advice to the old men.

- My ancient friends, farewell : and 'midst these ills
- Each day in pleasure bathe your drooping spirits,
- For treasured riches nought avail the dead.

— POTTAGE

“ Atossa hearing of the great slaughter of the Persians, and the shameful flight of her son, says :

- Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills
- Bursts o'er me ! Chief this foul disgrace, which shews
- My son divested of his *rich attire*,
- His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.
- But I will go, chuse the most gorgeous vest,
- And haste to meet my son.

POTTER.

“ At length, Xerxes appears with a list of the slain ; exhorts the chorus to tear his hair, beat his breast, rend his garments, and join with him in loud lamentations. And with this alternate symphony, the tragedy ends.

“ *Agamemnon*. This is unanimously allowed by the literary world, to be the most difficult and obscure of the tragedies of Æschylus, abounding with distorted and daring metaphors, with figures and ideas that only belong to lyric poetry. The plot is the assassination of Agamemnon, by Clytemnestra and Ægisthus. The person of Agamemnon is little seen ; he only appears once, and what he says, is not sufficient to furnish an idea of his character. That of the false, perfidious, and cruel Clytemnestra, is well drawn. The chorus is animated, obscure,

and

and lyrical: the enthusiastic predictions of Cassandra are of the same kind. The tragedy begins with a watchman, or sentinell, who speaks from the top of the royal palace. Clytemnestra having placed him there to discover when a lighted flambeau was to be seen, which would discover the ruin of Troy. And this was to be communicated by persons placed at equal distances from mount Ida and Argos. The flambeau is seen, and soon after a messenger arrives, as swift as lightning, with the news of the taking of Troy.

“ In this, as well as in other Greek tragedies, at the opening of a door in the scene, the dead body of the person slain is discovered, and often of many persons, not very easy to comprehend. In like manner, the words and cries of persons are heard in the street or square, who are killed in the interior palace. In this tragedy, the murderers remain unpunished.

“ The *Choephoræ*, or *Bearers of Libations*. The subject of this tragedy is the same as that to which Sophocles and Euripides have given the title of *Electra*. Æschylus styles those damsels *Choephoræ* who were in the service of Clytemnestra, but partial to
Electra,

Electra; and who follow her with the libations to be made to the tomb of Agamemnon. The style, as usual, is tumid and figurative to excess; but the conduct, in general, simple and natural.

“ In all the three Electras, probability seems wanting for the success of Orestes’s enterprise; but in this, more than in the others. Orestes, alone, unknown in the royal palace of his enemy, kills his mother, and the tyrant, without a single guard, domestic, or any one crying out or opposing him. The scene in which Orestes barbarously obliges his mother to enter the palace for him to murder her on the dead body of Ægisthus, is such an atrocious act of inhumanity, that Pere Brumoy himself, who used to be transported with every thing concerning the golden age of Athens, is obliged to confess this transaction to be insupportable.

“ Clytemnestra, at verse 893, in order to move her son to compassion, that he might not kill her, opens her breast, and reminds him of the milk which he had sucked from it. And a little before, verse 754, the nurse of Orestes, having thought him dead, weeps over him, and reminds him of the fatigue

which she had had in bringing him up; not forgetting to mention the inconvenience which he had put her to, during his little natural wants.

“ To enjoy these beauties, we should be enabled to transport ourselves to those venerable ages, when such things were admired, as profane moderns are unable to comprehend.

“ The *Eumenides*, or *Furies*. The action of this drama is the trial or absolution of Orestes. It begins in the temple of Apollo at Delphos. At the opening, the old Pythia appears, who makes a long invocation to all the presaging divinities, and retires to place herself on the tripod; but is seen no more throughout the tragedy, nor is it known why she appeared, nor why she did not return.

“ At v. 93, Orestes, conducted by Mercury, quits the temple of Delphos, to go to that of Minerva at Athens.

“ At v. 117, the Furies in a deep sleep in the temple of Delphos, answer, while they are snoring, the shade of Clytemnestra, who wishes to wake them, that they may pursue Orestes; and the ghost says: What! do you snore? So eager is the author that the audience should know and admire his invention.

" At v. 235, Orestes appears in the temple of Minerva at Athens: and the Furies, after a few verses, join him. A manifest and considerable breach of the unity of place. For if this is not a change of scene, what is it? And yet Aristotle does not resent the sacrilege. It is well for Æschylus, that he was born so many ages before M. d'Aubignac, who, I know not how, has dissembled this enormity of the father of tragedy, or let it escape his observation.

" At v. 663, Apollo says, that the son owes not his corporal existence to his mother.

— She but the nutrient soil
That gives the stranger growth.
*Procreat autem ille, qui insilet *.*

" This is one of those Grecian simplicities which modern palates cannot taste.

" *The Supplicants.* The conduct of this fable has all the simplicity so much admired

* Euripides sustains the same doctrine in Orestes:

My father was the author of my being:
Thy daughter brought me forth: he gave me life,
Which she but foster'd: to the higher cause
An higher reverence then I deemed was due.

POTTER.

by the severe connoisseurs of Grecian theatrical perfection. The fifty daughters of Danaus, to avoid being wedded to their fifty cousins, the sons of Ægyptus, fly with their father, to demand an asylum of Pelasgus, king of Argos, and obtain it. The paucity of events is supplied by the extreme inactivity, and prolixity, of the choruses. The scene is near the sea shore, where the images of the gods are placed, who preside at the Athletic games, not far from the city of Argos.

“ From v. 466, the Danaides, in order to induce Pelasgus to afford the asylum which he grants, carry on with him the following ingenious dialogue :

Chorus. (the daughters of Danaus).

Seest thou these braided zones that bind our robes ?

Pelasgus. Ornaments these that suit your female state.

Cho. Know then the honest purpose these shall serve.

Pelasg. What would thy words intend ? Explain thyself.

Cho. If honour shall not guard this female train—

Pelasg. How can these binding zones secure your safety ?

Cho. Hanging new trophies on these images.

Pelasg. Mysterious are thy words ; speak plainly to me.

Cho. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourselves.

POTTER.

“ The elegance of this little dialogue needs no explanation, to those who by dint of learning are become Athenians.

“ At

“ At the sight of a ship, which Danaus conjectures to be that which conducts the fifty sons of Ægyptus, he flies to the city to demand assistance against his persecutors; without its being known, why he leaves his daughters, who being young and active, might have gone on this business much better than their aged father, and not have been exposed to the violence of their cousins. The father leaves them, and a single herald from their cousins comes to order them to embark with him. They resist. He offers to force them on board; and they, though fifty in number, can only defend themselves by their screams.

“ But help arrives. Danaus has already been at Argos, and found Pelasgus; told him their danger, the soldiers are embodied, and have marched to the sea-side in the time that a few lines have been uttered.

“ The herald being departed; king Pelasgus invites Danaus and his daughters to come to Argos, assigns them habitations in the city, and departs. Danaus, before they set out, gives his daughters some wholesome admonition. But the thing which he recommends to them in the most anxious and prolix manner, is, *that they do not dishonour him in a strange land; that they afford no*

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opportunity

opportunity for scandal, but remain modest, though young women are much addicted to love.

“ Such an admonition in our times would be useless and injurious, supposing that royal princesses are incapable of failing in their duty; but in the time of Æschylus, there were no such suppositions; and simple nature was then represented, which is the delight of our literati.”

After thus pointing out where the unities are violated, the plots imperfect, the perpetrators of horrid crimes unpunished, and delicacy and propriety wounded, according to modern ideas; Metastasio gives a sketch of the life of Æschylus, and apologizes, not only for his imperfections, but for being forced to point them out.

“ Æschylus (says he) was doubtless the father of tragedy. He first put narratives into action, invented the stage, tragic dresses and masks; so that all the theatrical wonders in subsequent times are derived from his sublime inventions. We therefore owe him infinite gratitude and respect, and should exact them from others, if the envious impertinence of pedants, in order to depreciate their cotemporaries, did not stupidly and arrogantly

arrogantly exalt beyond measure whatever was reprehensible in him, which, however, ought to be respectfully over-looked, in gratitude for the incomparable merit of a first invention; and if proud of their lamentable observations, they did not erect themselves into legislators of an art of which they are wholly ignorant, and in which they have either had no experience, or when they have had the presumption to attempt to acquire it, have become the objects of public derision. Hence even respectable men have been forced to reflect, and declare to the world how little is come down to us from our predecessors that is valuable; not with a view to diminish their fame, but merely to unmask the livid and false oracles of the poor disfigured Parnassus.

“ The style of *Æschylus* is sublime, figurative, and metaphorical to excess. Terror is always the object which he proposes: his scholiast asserts, that in the representation of the *Eumenides*, many children died of fright, and many pregnant women miscarried! *Credat Judæus Apella.*”

The remaining seven tragedies of *SOPHOCLES*; the nineteen of *EURIPIDES*; and the

the eleven comedies of ARISTOPHANES, are analyzed in the same concise and characteristic manner as the dramas of Æschylus. Many of his reflexions on the Greek dramatists have been inserted in the Abstract of the Poetics of Aristotle. Indeed more instances seem to have been given by Metastasio of the total inattention to any rule concerning the unities in Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, than in Æschylus; or rather more proofs that no such rule existed, when these great fathers of theatrical excellence flourished. For when any one of the unities has escaped violation in their dramas, it seems more to have been by chance, than from any fixed rule or principle: as there is scarce any one of their comedies or tragedies where they are entirely preserved; though there are many which would have been much injured if they had escaped violation.

The extreme difference in ancient and modern times, of manners, morals, religion, and even in the construction of theatres, renders close and servile imitation of the Greek dramatists now inadmissible; though the bold, sublime, and noble sentiments, the heroic virtues and characters, and the exquisite

quisite beauties of the conceptions and morality in the poetry of the choral odes, must always excite the wonder and rapture of men of sound learning and good taste, in all ages and countries, where the compositions of the ancient Greeks are understood in the original, or their true spirit is transfused into other languages by translation.

In the review of the *Andromache* of EURIPIDES, Metastasio has pointed out such instances in the language and sentiments of that tragedy, as, if closely imitated or translated, would be thought coarse, indecorous, and far from decent in a modern drama.

The strange events and seemingly absurd and impure language of the heroic characters, would not be difficult for the moderns to copy and adopt ; but the sublime beauties of the poetry, and sometimes of the sentiments, will never be made common by theft or open imitation in modern times.

So licentious, scurrilous, and not only farcastic, but malignant a dramatist as ARISTOPHANES, was not likely to be treated with partiality by so moral, benevolent, and decorous a writer, as Metastasio ; yet so just, discriminative, and candid are his reflexions

on

on the remains of this merciless enemy of Socrates and Euripides; that his greatest admirers and imitators must allow him to be treated with that temper and fairness, with which Aristophanes never treated friends or foes, or even the gods themselves.

After indicating the defects in the plan of his *Plutus*, Metastasio says: that “ notwithstanding these censures, the dialogue of this piece is so natural, full of grace, and the most acute and poignant wit, that it manifests the genius, and rich mine of ridicule with which he was possessed. In the midst of the most indecent deformities with which this comedy abounds, we sometimes meet with traits of the most solid morality; particularly in the defence which *Poverty* makes of herself, which is worthy of Plato.

“ He regards the *Female Orators*, not like Pere Brumoy, as a severe satire on women, but rather as a satire on the inconstancy and folly of the Athenian people, in perpetually reforming and changing their form of government; adopting the visions of the most extravagant projectors, provided they were *new*; and therefore the author recommends that women should be placed at the head of
the

the state, as the only revolutionary project left untried. So that this is not the most indecent of his pieces, as has been generally imagined, though certainly the most disgusting; as he has not scrupled to introduce a magistrate easing himself in the street; during which time he is extremely witty to the spectators, and gives them an ample dose of Attic salt and pleasantry.

“Aristophanes (says Metastasio) was a poet of an extraordinary imagination and eloquence; daring, impudent, malicious, and a contemner of all order, decency, humanity, probability, and almost common sense, in his allegories and allusions; provided they gratified his spite and spleen. Plutarch, among the ancients, and Pere Brumoy, in modern times, have declared this poet to be insufferable among honest and well educated men in any civilized country. He delighted the Athenian mob, by ridiculing every thing that was venerable, and which had long been thought sacred; and his principal object was the destruction of religion and morality, by burlesquing the reasoning of Socrates, as modern philosophers do the sacred writings and the doctrines of the most pious and profound theologians.”

Among

Among the *select Letters* which occupy the chief part of this publication, there are several which were not inserted in the five volumes of the Poet's correspondence in the *Nice* edition of his works; but these are neither so long, nor, seemingly, so important, as many that have been omitted. In looking at the index of letters that appear in these additional volumes, I perceived one to the Empress Queen; several to the Princess di Belmonte; three to Goldoni; three or four to Calfabigi; two to the celebrated chief of the Bologna school of singing, Bernacchi; two to Diodati; two to Captain Benincasa; one to Father Boscovich; one to Mr. Hoole, and one to Cahusac, that are not in the *Nice* edition.

Of three notes written in French, by the Empress Queen, to the imperial laureat, two have already been inserted in these *Memoirs*. The inedited poetry is very inconsiderable; and the sketch of his life is chiefly taken from Rezer's epitome.

His WILL, made in 1765, and the CODICIL, dated 1780, inserted at the end of the third volume, caught my attention; and I was very glad to find in them a clear and satisfactory refutation of the want of affection
for

for his family, which has been unjustly laid to his charge * ; and which, if true, would have considerably diminished the excellence of his moral character.

It appears in his *Testament*, made 1765, that he bequeaths to his brother LEOPOLD (whom he calls his *amabilissimo fratello*) 500 Roman crowns a year (the interest of 30,000 crowns) and the same to his sister BARBARA. To Mademoiselle Marianna Martinez, he leaves 12,000 florins, with his harpsichord, clavichord, music-books, and book-case; and appoints her residuary legatee, in case she survived her brother Giuseppe.

In the *Codicil*, dated 1780, *his brother and sister being dead*, he made a new and more considerable disposition of his effects in favour of the Martinez family, with whom he had lived in uninterrupted friendship and affection, upwards of fifty years; and to whose care and kindness, during a long series of ill health, he ascribed his longevity.

Another draw-back from his fortitude and philosophy, which has been triumphantly made by those who, unfoundedly, accused

* See Vol. I. of these Memoirs, p. 112.

him of an invincible repugnance to speaking of old age, and death, is taken off; not only by his frequently mentioning both in his letters, with no more horror than other mortals; but by the following passage in his last will :

“ Having been afflicted with a very precarious state of health during forty years, which often rendered life insufferable, it is my wish, after my decease, to have my body opened by a skilful surgeon, in hopes that some discovery will be made, that may be of use to my survivors.” Envy itself could fasten no *vice* upon him; and the *frailties* and *infirmities* that have been laid to his charge, seem very easy for candour to invalidate.

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Page 8, note *, *for* seventy-four, *read* seventy-two. P. 10, last line but five, *r. hastily*. P. 11, last line but four, *for* remonstrances, *r. remembrances*. P. 14, l. 17, *r. 1774*. P. 26, l. 14, *r. Brethren*. P. 30, note (d) *for* above, *r. Vol. II*. P. 33, l. 15, *r. extremely*. Ibid. l. 21, *r. caught*. P. 40, Letter XIV. has, by mistake, been translated and inserted here a second time. P. 54, title of Let. II. *r. ONOFRI*. P. 71, l. 10, *r. always*. P. 102, l. 4, *et alia*, *r. Erysielas*. P. 178, l. 20, *del. of*. P. 242, l. 15, *r. occasions*. P. 283, l. penult, *r. fulfilling*; and last line, *r. acquiring*. P. 284, l. 3, *r. need*. P. 297, l. 20, *for* elegant, *r. ingenious*. P. 298, l. 21, *r. delineates*. P. 301, l. 17, *r. Vinci*. P. 302, l. 16, *r. the Olympiade*. P. 303, l. 8, *r. historical*. P. 323, l. 18, *r. Vertu*. P. 324, l. 20, *r. Scenes*. P. 362, note (t) *for* these extracts, *r. this abstract*. P. 378, l. 11, *r. commiseration*. P. 380, note (r) l. 4, *r. Rauzzini*. P. 399, l. 21, *r. Clytemnestra*.

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